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# FIVE SERMONS

PREACHED

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

THE FIRST FOUR IN NOVEMBER, 1851,

THE FIFTH ON THURSDAY, MARCH THE 8TH, 1849, BEING  
THE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN  
KNOWLEDGE,

BY THE

ames.  
REV. J. J. BLUNT, B.D.,

MARGARET PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY.

Content -

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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CIRCUMSTANCES having induced me to publish the Four Sermons I delivered before the University in November last, I have taken the opportunity of adding to them another addressed to the same honoured audience in 1849, on the Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. In this latter will be found perhaps one or two thoughts which will have been presented to the reader in some of the Sermons which precede it: a defect arising from a considerable interval having elapsed between the dates of these respective compositions, and from the publication of them not having been in either case deliberately contemplated when they were written. I think it better to acknowledge this defect, such as it is, than attempt to remove it by suppressing the passages in question, and probably damaging the argument; more especially as the Anniversary Sermon was printed at the request of the Sub-Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in Cambridge soon after the delivery of it; and was subsequently adopted by the Parent Society, and placed on the List of its Publications.

CAMBRIDGE,

*March 15, 1852.*



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# SERMON I.

Preached at Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge, Nov. 2, 1851.

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## TESTS OF THE TRUTH OF REVELATION.

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### 1 THESS. V. 21.

*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

THE Apostle is pressing on the Thessalonians, with all the earnestness that belonged to him, the Gospel which he had preached; and confident in the soundness of his teaching, does not plead for it a bare acceptance, but challenging them to a scrutiny of its claims, searching as that by which metals are tried, bids them abide by the issue. Prove the Gospel, says he, by whatever tests you please, I care not what; but if it stands the proving, hold it fast.

What can be more reasonable? what more worthy of the character he was sustaining, and the cause he advocated? Let us follow his bidding, and refresh our recollection of some of the strong, substantial foundations of our faith. For though it has been remarked that the subject of the evidences is handled too frequently in this Church;—perhaps the neutral character of that subject tempting the preacher to repose upon it in times when the enunciation of Christianity in any definite form whatever is made matter of contention and controversy, and any attempt to build up the Church has to be carried on, as was the building of Jerusalem of old, one hand doing the work, and the other holding the weapon;—yet it cannot be denied that this place, if any, is the proper field for such an argument as that on the evidences—arena as it is for so much free-

dom of debate amongst the young, the intelligent, and the speculative ; it cannot be denied that seasons there are when there is a peculiar call for its production ; and it scarcely can be denied that this is one, when in order to counteract what is supposed to be an objectionable outbreak of ecclesiastical principles, people are ready to put in jeopardy even those of Christianity ; when it seems to be the notion of many that the true way to Protestantise the country, as it is called, is to deluge it with doubts ; that positive opinions upon the Church will at any rate be shaken, if it can but be shewn that positive opinions are out of place even with respect to the Gospel itself ; and that you will infallibly save men from being bigots if you can but succeed in making them free-thinkers.

Meanwhile, I for my part renounce all pretensions to novelty in this address to you—the case does not admit of it. In what I have to say I shall be found to draw from quarters familiar to most or all of you, satisfied if I put you in remembrance of weighty things, as was sometimes St Paul's manner, nor waste such an occasion of doing good, as this pulpit above all affords, in pursuing fastidious fancies, or in seeking self-renown ; and, accordingly, I pray you not to come here to play the critics, but to let my thoughts—or I should rather say, the thoughts of others far more worthy of commanding your attention, and who though dead will now speak to you—lodge in your hearts, where they deserve to do so, however often they may have entered them before, and be content with me, though I may happen to do nothing but with all plainness of speech move you to believe your Bibles and save your souls.

Try the Gospel then by your own observation of the probability of that future state which it teaches.

Do we not see this life presenting to us *progressive* stages of existence? Does not the shell burst, and a new world open upon the bird? Does not the loathsome and torpid worm slough off its integuments, and the fly beautiful in colour, and fitted to take its pastime in the air, issue forth? How different has been our own condition at different periods already—in the womb, in infancy, in mature manhood; will the next change after death, as the Gospel represents it, be greater?

Again, do we not feel an instinctive craving for a continuance of existence; an appetite for it, which would scarcely have been planted in us, unless some provision had been made for its gratification; innocent, nay more than innocent, as it is in itself? Does want, does misery, does actual doubt about our lot in futurity, suffice to extinguish in us this thirst for it? 'Who would lose, though full of pain, his intellectual being?' Do the most wretched of men pray that they may find relief in annihilation? Are not even the least gifted amongst us conscious of capacities which are too vast for full development in this world? and does not that large heart constitute the chief source of action even here; as the effort of the mainspring of the watch to uncoil itself, and occupy a wider space than the limits of its barrel, sets all the wheels in motion? Could the business of life, even of this temporal life, go on successfully, if remaining reasonable creatures we had still to act in it under a persuasion that it was the only state of existence we were to know?

Again, is there any thing in death, so far as we are aware, which should necessarily lead us to suppose that it will prove destructive of the living principle? Certainly a swoon, or even sleep, has many of the effects of death,

yet neither of them injures, one of them actually invigorates its powers. Is it not perpetually observed that the approach of death, however it may enfeeble the body, and ruin its functions, so far from impairing the faculties of the soul, gives them fresh force? that the sufferer seems to assume a mental dignity not his own; and the reflections he utters acquire a weight which renders his sick chamber a school of high philosophy; as though his Spirit was already refreshed by a breath which had reached it from the borders of Paradise? And if this be the case only once, as assuredly it is the case very often, which all who have attended on the dying can testify, does it not intimate that death, in its advances at least, and so long as we have any opportunity of watching its action, is very far from being destructive of the living principle?

Then for the effects of death on the body, does the dissolution of the matter with which the living agent has happened to be in close connexion necessarily imply that such agent, if not material itself, would be touched by it? And is there not every reason to believe that material it is not? Can we manipulate matter in any way so as to make it think? And can we suppose consciousness to be divisible, so that part of it shall be here and part there; and if not consciousness, then not the power of consciousness, and therefore the subject in which it resides, the conscious being?

Or, to put the same argument in the more popular language of another master of such reasoning, conveyed in perhaps the most charming of his works—a tale full of wisdom—‘is it less certain when we think on a pyramid, that our mind possesses the idea of a pyramid, than that the pyramid itself is standing? Yet what *space*

does the idea of a pyramid occupy more than the idea of a grain of corn; or how can either idea suffer laceration? As is the effect, such is the cause; as thought, such is the power that thinks; a power impassive and indiscernible.'

Is the body more than a case of instruments, which the living agent when summoned away, having no further use for them, surrenders to be broken up? The eye, its glass with which it had looked out; the hand, its vice with which it had grasped the spade, the shuttle, or the pen? Has not every particle of matter in us been dissolved and replaced over and over again, without the identity of the living agent having been in the smallest degree affected?

When, therefore, the Gospel teaches that there is a world to come, does it not teach that which nature itself shews to be credible?

And if in opposition to this reasoning it be said, that brutes may be thus argued to be immortal, it may be replied, (though the objection might be met in other ways,) that we are ignorant of the nature and capacities of brutes, and are not therefore in a position to speculate upon their destinies; ignorant of the precise character of the future world, and of the orders of creatures God may or may not think fit to have in it.

Try the Gospel further. It teaches not merely a future state, but a future state of happiness or misery contingent upon our conduct here: And do we not see the same dispensation taking effect already? Is not the world we live in full of happiness or misery which is made to hinge on our own behaviour—the analogy of nature coincident with the representations of the Gospel to very minute particulars? Does not success constantly depend on seizing the opportunity whilst we



may, and neglect of the opportunity produce all the inconveniences of extravagance and folly? Does not a present imprudent gratification constantly entail upon us distress; distress, apparently out of all proportion to the pleasure? Is not the one often very transitory, the other long, perhaps life-long? Does not an act brief in the fruition fasten upon the party shame or ignominy for the remainder of his days? Is not a course of recklessness recoverable up to a certain point, but not beyond it; and does not a time come when, warnings repeatedly received and as often neglected, the net is allowed to fall upon us?

Nor is this all. The Gospel teaches that the happiness and misery of this future state are to be of the nature of reward and punishment for our behaviour here.

But does not the world around us give token, amidst much confusion, that it is under the control of a Governor, who dispenses happiness or misery, not capriciously, but according to a rule of right or wrong, to the righteous and to the wicked respectively? Did not the heathens themselves think so? Was it not this feeling which spoke in the barbarous people of Melita, who, on seeing the viper fasten on St Paul's hand, accounted him a murderer, that had escaped indeed the sea, but whom vengeance suffered not to live? And was not the law so strongly impressed on the mind of Claudian that the exceptions to it, (for exceptions he could not but observe), he tells us in a well-known passage, for a moment staggered him, till he satisfied himself there might be a cause, and absolved the gods? Do we not see that virtue on the whole secures the favour of mankind, vice their reproach? That in general, and on the long run, the good man prospers,

the bad comes to nought ; the dispensation sufficiently uniform to indicate the side which God takes ? And what is more, do we not perceive virtue and vice exhibiting *tendencies* to produce happiness and misery in a far more intense degree than they do in fact, accident interposing ? And do not such tendencies point very significantly to a heaven or hell for their final consummation, such as the Gospel tells of ; a heaven of joy, which the heart of man cannot conceive ; a hell of anguish, which he shudders to contemplate ?

Again, the Gospel represents this life as a state of trial for another : not simply a state of existence in which right is to be pursued and wrong avoided, but a state of trial, in which there is *difficulty* in pursuing right and avoiding wrong ; temptations to the contrary ; a risk of miscarriage :—But does not the natural government of God which we already experience, imply that we are in a state of trial ; that we are in the midst of these difficulties, temptations, and risks ? Let us confine our view to the present world. Must we not confess that there is the strongest call to the exercise of prudence, and forethought, and self-restraint, in order to gain advantages in it, or escape disaster ? Are there not objects offering themselves to our appetites on every side which afford indeed instant gratification, but at the cost of subsequent uneasiness out of all proportion to it ? And may we not discern that the struggle which is thus constantly in progress between passion and reason generates wholesome habits, calculated to mould the character, and fit it for higher station and weightier functions than it would otherwise reach ? Is it not then consistent with this dispensation which is familiar to us and indisputable, that in like manner the training of the present life should be meant to

qualify us for the next, and be subordinate to our elevation amongst the angels?

Thus far we have been considering the testimony the analogy of nature bears to the truth of the Gospel indeed, but only to such features of the Gospel as are common to it with Natural Religion, with the religion that treats of the Father; but the analogy of nature supports also in a considerable degree Revealed Religion, or that which incorporating in itself the other and adding to it, treats of the Son and the Holy Ghost besides; supports it, I mean, so far as to shew that from the resemblance it exhibits to the system of nature, even in those features of it which are not common to it with natural religion, it is highly credible.

The Fall is such a doctrine of Revelation; the Fall, by which the sin of one man is said to have entailed ruin on the whole race. For is not this incident strictly in harmony with what is experienced in the course of nature; with what we witness every day? Does not the folly of a parent taint his posterity, generation after generation? Do we not trace the decay and downfall of families to one thoughtless ancestor? and could we follow the pedigree of the poor-house, the mad-house, or the gaol, should we not constantly find these worlds in miniature peopled with a fallen race, through some forefather's lapse, near or remote?

A Mediator between God and Man is another doctrine of Revelation, as distinct from Natural Religion, the foremost doctrine: But does not the analogy of nature tend very strongly to confirm this too? Does not the general prevalence of propitiatory sacrifice over the heathen world express the spontaneous sense of mankind that something beyond ourselves, and independent of ourselves, is wanted to undo the effects



of our misdeeds? Is not the life of all creatures preserved in the first instance by the instrumentality of others? is it not often rescued, when put in jeopardy, by the skill of others? Are not the natural consequences which belong to imprudent actions very often relieved by a timely interposition, and the issue intercepted? Is not this very often effected at another's expense, and by another volunteering a sacrifice? Do we not constantly find the reckless member of a household saved from himself by the generous self-devotion of some other member, at much inconvenience and cost?

Nor is this all. Very many of the *objections* to Revelation are precisely such as may be alleged against God's natural government of the world: For instance, that its light is not universal; that many generations had passed away before the light was imparted at all; that it even now extends to a portion only of mankind; and that all this is inconsistent with our notions of the justice of God. But may not the like be said of almost all God's gifts? Have not great discoveries been made from time to time in science and art, deeply affecting the health, comfort, and welfare of our species, from which the multitude of persons who lived and died before these discoveries, derived no benefit, and the knowledge of which is even yet perhaps confined within narrow limits?

Or, that the evidence of Revelation is doubtful; that had God really meant to put the world in possession of his will, it would have been clear and express: But is it so in his natural government? In the pursuit of our temporal interests have we often demonstration for our guide? On the contrary, have we not to balance conflicting probabilities, and act upon the preponderance? When the great discoverer worked his

way across the waste of waters hitherto unexplored, had he *assurance* of the existence of his object before him? or did he keep up his heart and his hope by the testimony he could draw in the exercise of his own sagacity, from a current, a bird, a weed, a floating spar? and yet had he not his reward at last in a new heaven and a new earth bursting upon his delighted eye? Which thing is an allegory. May we not very well believe that it is the exercise of the care, discrimination, forethought, which this process renders necessary, that is designed to test the man? and that accordingly so far is it from being a thing incredible for God to have made the evidence of Revelation doubtful, the contrary is true; the analogy of nature pointing out the very same to be the law under which we have to act with respect to our worldly affairs; and pointing out too the apparent reason for such a law in the wholesome consequences which result from it?

It would be easy to produce many other objections to Revelation to which the analogy of nature would supply similar answers; and indeed the value of the argument in this aspect of it is above all price; as a weapon against the sceptic, or against sceptical thoughts, which may arise in our own hearts, there is none like it; none which can be wielded with so much safety, and so much success.

But it may be said, that hitherto we have not proved Revelation to be *true*, but only to be *credible*. Still this is a great point gained; a very advantageous position from which to make our further advances; especially when we bear in mind the nature of the Scriptures through which this Revelation is imparted; that they are in themselves documents as unsystematic as possible; the effusions or narrations of many per-

sons — unlettered persons several of them — who evidently had no theory to put forward; were not at all thinking about squaring their teaching by the analogy of nature, and deriving credit from their doctrines by making them accord with principles which none could dispute. Indeed the argument, prodigiously powerful as it is, was hardly heard of for seventeen hundred years; few persons aware of it; none aware of its force. For though the nucleus of it is to be found in Scripture itself; and though several of the early Fathers touch on it, from one of whom indeed Dr Butler seems to acknowledge that he derived his hint, yet that profound thinker was the first who impressed it on the world; and it might be added, in further illustration of the comparative disadvantage under which the government of God sees fit to allow some to labour, that so many hundred years should have been suffered to elapse, and infidelity to slay its thousands, before a treatise like the Analogy appeared.

Revelation, however, has its *positive* evidences, as well as its *probable*. Let us still then follow the Apostle's advice, and try it by some of these.

Try it by the miracles which accompanied its promulgation. Miracles attest the Mosaic Revelation; miracles attest the Christian. Do we not see the establishment of these two great institutions attendant upon them? Does not the supposition of the reality of these miracles account for those institutions; and would they be easily accounted for in any other way; onerous, restrictive, and self-denying as they both are? Nay, does not the independence and yet the connexion of these two institutions afford a strong argument for the veracity of both? Is it not highly incredible that there should have been two religions published at an interval

of many hundred years, both asserting claims to be received on the same kind of evidence; both taking their rise from the date of the wonderful facts which are said to have attested them; the one the type, the other the anti-type; the one the part, the other the counterpart; and yet neither of them be true? more especially when the nature of some of these types is considered; that they are in fact the annals of a nation; the annals of a nation shaped by God to be prophetic? For what else, e. g. is the escape of the Israelites from the bondage in Egypt; their baptism in the sea; their forty years' temptation and pilgrimage in the wilderness; the impossibility of their gaining an entrance into the land of rest, except through Joshua or Jesus, with very much more of the same kind? An esoteric principle too, evidently governing the *history* of that people, dictating the events in it that shall be narrated, and the events that shall be suppressed, and imparting to those incidents a scale of its own; for it is clear that it is not the relative importance of the events themselves which determines the production or neglect of them in the history.

Then do not these miracles, as reported in Scripture, abound in details, many of them admitting the application of the argument of coincidence without design, and not flinching from that test? Is not the narrative of them always sober, unimpassioned, unadorned, often most circumstantial? Turn to the 9th chapter of the Gospel of St John, and read the account of the blind man restored to sight by Jesus, and of the investigation which followed; mark the incidents as they severally come out; the place, the day, the identification of the party by the bystanders, who remembered him as an old acquaintance whom they had often seen



begging ; the examination of him by the jealous Pharisees ; then that of his parents ; once more, that of the man himself ; the cautious replies of the one ; the bolder carriage of the other, so naturally prompted by the signal benefit he had just received, and his grateful desire to vindicate the character of his benefactor : Who can peruse this history, so clear, so precise, so inartificial, and doubt about its truth and accuracy ?

Or take those crowning miracles, the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, which, if real, vouch for all the rest : can we observe the manner in which they are treated and doubt them ? Does not the Resurrection enter into all the speeches and all the proceedings of the Apostles, as recorded in the Acts, in the most artless way possible ? in a way which indicates that their minds at least were possessed with the fact ; that it never occurred to them to debate the proof of it ; that it seemed to them to admit of no dispute ? Is not the same the mode in which it is touched in the Epistles ? “ If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above : ” “ If we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his Resurrection : ” And do not the earliest post-apostolical writers speak of this prodigious event in the selfsame manner, never staying to demonstrate it, or appeal to the evidence for it, but taking it for granted, and founding on it their argument ?

Is it not most remarkable too, that if we compare the Acts of the Apostles with the Gospels, we find the persecutors of the Christians, as a body, changed ; the Pharisees taking the lead in the Gospels, the Sadducees in the Acts ; the great event of the Resurrection, and the impression it had produced in the mean season, having shifted the quarter of the assault ? Yet our

attention is never drawn to this singular coincidence by the documents themselves.

So with respect to the other incident, the Ascension: St John in his Gospel gives no account of it whatever; yet is that Gospel full of casual expressions which betray that it was a fact not only familiar to him, but held by him as indisputable: "No man hath *ascended* up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven:" "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man *ascend* up where he was before?"

The same may be said of the Epistles; the thing assumed, not discussed; "If ye then be Christ's seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

The same, of the references to it in all the most Primitive Christian authors. And again, I would call your notice to the immense importance of those authors in this aspect of them; found, as they are, to proceed without hesitation or misgiving, in all their reasonings, on the unqualified understanding that the great facts of the Gospel, miraculous or not, are true, and acknowledged by all Christians.

But is not this indirect testimony to such events as the Resurrection and Ascension which I have adduced, of a kind to convey to us, beyond any other, the assurance felt by the witnesses, of the reality of them? and are not the events themselves of a nature that did not admit of mistake at least?

Try the Gospel by prophecy. Are not the prophecies themselves, which are the subjects of our appeal, above suspicion? Do not many of those of the Old Testament, in the midst of others having a higher object, relate to the *temporal* incidents of the commonwealth of Israel; the unfolding of which incidents—for

it occupies a series of years and many generations—satisfied the Jews, even independently of all reference to the Messiah, of their divine character; nothing but the foreknowledge of God being capable of dictating them? For the Jews had enrolled them in their canon of prophecy on the strength of such *temporal* events as they foretold having come to pass and fallen within their own experience, long before they considered the Messiah to be due? Are not these prophecies too, like the miracles, encircled by circumstances which admit the test of undesigned coincidence, and sustain it very singularly?

Then with respect to the prophecies which relate to the *Messiah*: Have not the books which contain all the prophecies, these amongst the number, been preserved by the enemies themselves of Christianity, and been translated into another language hundreds of years before Christ came? And yet do not those which concern the Messiah embrace almost all the principal features of the Gospel which he and his disciples taught? Do not the books of Isaiah and of the Psalms alone contain almost the history of the New Testament by anticipation? in many cases down to particulars the most minute, and as we should say, insignificant, but on that very account the most telling of any?

Try it by profane literature. Do not many features of Revelation find their way into that, how we scarcely know: the peopling of the earth; the golden age; the flood; the bow in the cloud as a token; the Sabbath; the rites of sacrifice? Do not the Prometheus; the Pollio; ‘the ancient and fixed persuasion,’ of which Suetonius speaks, ‘that about that time there should come out of Judæa those who should rule the world;’ the simi-

lar one of which Tacitus makes mention; the mysterious Sibyl; all swell the testimony?

Try it by the sufferings sustained for its sake by the first teachers and converts, and their earliest followers. Could these, being what they were, have been supported without a motive—without a most intense motive? Not merely the sword, the gibbet, the flame, and the various direct tortures by which the enemies of the Gospel sought to put it down, which only served however to draw the blood that proved the Church's seed; but the more trying forms of persecution, perhaps, at which our Lord hinted, when he spoke of the divided house, the hatred of all men, the *daily* cross? the severity, extent, and duration of which none can at all estimate who have not examined the records of early Christian times, and especially the Apologies; in which the domestic misery arising from family schisms, suspicions sown between husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, the surrender of questionable trades and occupations for conscience sake, the consequent poverty and loss,—all through the disturbing force of the Gospel,—demonstrate that nothing but a faith founded on a rock could have supported its victims through an ordeal of their sincerity so galling and so protracted.

Little, surely, do they who disparage the study of early Christian antiquity, know of the precious contingent it supplies to the testimony for our faith, and the stability it gives to its foundations.

Try it by the *circumstantial* evidence with which the Scriptures overflow. No writings afford more scope for this test than some of them; scarcely any so much; dating as many of them do from the most civilized and best known scenes in the world; scenes full of contem-



porary history. Does not the Acts of the Apostles, for instance, lay itself open to continual check, in forms innumerable, cast as it is in the midst of events, of agents, and of epochs, replete with critical points of contact; Jewish, Greek, Roman customs perpetually touched in it; official names of obscure local magistrates, municipal, geographical, chronological incidents ever transpiring in it? And though nothing can bear fewer marks of study or elaborate construction than this book, or exhibit less symptom of having been written under the expectation of a scrutiny, yet a scrutiny it sustains the most searching; the jealousy of the scholar and antiquary, exercised upon the most ample materials, not discovering in it a flaw, but on the contrary, characteristics of truth and accuracy which it is impossible to gainsay. Or let the same book be compared in the same inquisitorial spirit, as it has been, with the Epistles of St Paul, a principal actor in the history; and are not the indications of veracity in either, which are thus brought to light, such as would satisfy a jury in a case of life and death? Can modern theories, it may be asked in passing, of a Christianity not resting upon a Gospel History, and a Christ independent of a personal Saviour, be reconciled at all, with evidence of this kind altogether based upon the principles which apply to matters of fact in the ordinary transactions of life?

Try the Gospel by the very tone, temper, and character of the books which teach it—no test carries along with it more satisfaction to the inquirer. Is it possible to read the Epistles of St Paul, we will say, and entertain a doubt of the candour, the integrity, the perfect honesty and trustworthiness of the writer? How earnest is he in his exhortations! How penetrated with the infinite importance of the doctrines he is delivering,

and the duties he draws from them! How exalted are his views! How clear of all suspicion his motives! How holy and animated his prayers! How awakening his appeals! When after expounding the mysteries confided to him he breaks away, as he often does, into a strain of practical precept, and bids us, "Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men, see that no man render evil for evil," and the like, is there not that in our spirits which warms at once to his, and protests against the possibility of such a man being an impostor, and such messages a pretence? Or when we turn to such a passage as that in the Acts, where the same Apostle assembles the elders of the church at Miletus, to give them his parting charge and wish them farewell; where he bids them take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers; calls to their minds how that for three years he had not ceased to warn them night and day with tears; commends them to God, and to the Word of His Grace; challenges them to say whether during his sojourn amongst them he had coveted any man's silver, or gold, or apparel; ending all by kneeling down and praying with them, till they wept sore, and fell on his neck and kissed him, grieving most of all for the words that he spake, that they should see his face no more; is not the scene and the record of it enough to carry conviction to the mind of the most sceptical that the transaction is real, and the parties eminently truthful and virtuous? Indeed this is the argument which makes its way to the hearts of the great bulk of mankind, and suffices of itself to satisfy them, that without further inquiry, for which they have neither time nor means, they may safely trust to it, and declare on the strength of it, that as for them and

their house, they will cleave to the Gospel, and live and die by it.

Try it by its wholesome effects on society; by the duties of imperfect obligation which it enforces—duties the most numerous and the most important of all, and which law cannot reach; by the grace with which it regulates the relations of domestic life; establishes humane and charitable foundations; protects and elevates the weaker sex; causes the fetter to drop away from the slave nobody knows when or how; inspires nations with mutual good will; and even mitigates the horrors of necessary war.

Try it by its wholesome effects on ourselves. How are we at peace within so long as we are walking according to its dictates; acting as if it were true; how ill at ease with ourselves and all around us so soon as we despise it, and act as if it were false! Do we not seem in the one case to be going along with God's Providence, our steps safe, our way smooth, our prospects bright and joyous, in the sun-shine of the heart; in the other, to be fighting against God, to be entangled with troubles and hinderances, our sky cloudy, cheerless, and overcast? Do we not feel the Gospel to be a faithful regulator of our course, chastening us in our prosperity, comforting us in our distress, guiding us in our perplexity, animating us in our sloth; now urging, and now repressing us; and rendering us wise in our generation, in proportion as we submit to its dictates?

Above all, try it by the thoughts and feelings that accompany the decline and close of life; those sobering hours when we stand on the brink of the awful abyss, and contemplate its nature from a nearer position.

The main reason why arguments such as those I have been adducing for the truth of the Gospel have not their natural weight is, that for many years we do

not compel ourselves to give them our attention. "My people will not *consider*," was God's complaint of old. It takes some time to convince us that we are mortal. Youth is strong and confident, and flushed with animal spirits, so that it cannot be persuaded it shall not last. Manhood is full of business and worldly cares, and is not at leisure for religious thoughts. But as years advance; as infirmity forces us to withdraw from the turmoil of life; as its prizes seem more worthless in our eyes; as friends drop off; as symptoms of mortality thicken about us; our minds become more disposed to entertain the subject of religion; to bestow on it due reflection; are better qualified to estimate it rightly; are more pensive. What then is the turn our ideas take under these more favourable circumstances; when they are likely to be more correct, more just, inasmuch as they are more carefully directed to their object? Surely the ideas with respect to Revelation which strike mankind then, are the safe ones to entertain about it at all times; if they are intrinsically the best, they are at all seasons the best; the best for youth as well as for age; the best when out of sight, as well as when in it.

But do not the thoughts and feelings of the latter hours of life draw men with wonderful force towards a faith in the Gospel? Do they not then perceive, at length, however they may have dealt with the matter before, that there is no staff on which to lean but that? How strangely does the relative proportion of things change when that crisis is nearing!

Do we not see the politician and the warrior, whose mind has been long occupied in seizing an empire, securing possession of it, and labouring to transmit it, passing to the consideration of whether one who had

once been in a state of grace could ever forfeit it? whether the innocence of his earlier days could tide over the questionable doings of his later? Where is his ambition now? Is not now his kingdom itself as much a bauble in his eyes as the mace of its parliament once was?

Do we not see the reckless and licentious sensualist sporting with his fine faculties for many years, and making himself merry with subjects the most solemn and sacred, now turning about in consternation; his great gifts now directed for the first time to an object worthy of them, spending themselves on it with a relish that surprises both his friends and himself? With what a contrite heart does he now review the abuses of the past! How eager is he now to atone for them by any humiliation however abject! to publish to the world as a warning his own scandalous example, and poignant penitence! How does he now welcome the approach of his confessor—of his confessor, himself raised wonderfully above his own natural level, by the deep interest and dignity of his office—and pour out his heart to him, and commune with him on his prospects beyond the grave, with an importunity the most touching!

I need not say that I am looking to the memoir of the dying hours of a profligate wit, which one of the greatest of our moral writers has pronounced to be a book “which the critic ought to read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety.”

Or to take a case of a very different description, but one not uncommon. Do we not see the spirit of the philosopher in religion—pure let him be in his morality—justly held in esteem by all for his many virtues—his probity, his humanity, his truth—do we not



see even his spirit greatly humbled when he feels the hand of death upon him? Do speculations which in the pride of life he might have once indulged now satisfy him? As a dying man himself, does he find comfort in the thought which he could once suggest to a dying man, of the hopes there are of a moral government, and a future state, and of the innocence of involuntary doubt? or does he now fly to the same faith, and the same homely expression of it as the meanest peasant, and mysterious as the redemption had before appeared to him, "believe in Jesus?"

How imperfect an array of arguments whereby to test the Gospel have I advanced! How imperfect my developement of each of them! But are they not enough, nevertheless, both in number and intensity, to move us seriously? Many as they are, and diverse as they are, do they not all point to the truth of that Gospel, as the spokes of a wheel to the centre? Then what a thing it is to run risks about! To play with, to trifle about, to speculate on! What if after all we should have to be sobered by the flames! What if after all Hell should prove to be, what somebody says of it, "Truth seen too late!"

Hold then fast the conclusion at which we have arrived, that the Gospel is true—not only hold it, but hold it fast. The very term implies that it requires an effort to do so; that there are forces constantly acting on us to wrest it from us; social convenience; party politics; the spirit of the age; semi-sceptical literature, a poison now administered largely through theology itself; to say nothing of the more gross and ordinary incentives to laxity of religious principle.

Probably moments have occurred to every one here when the magnitude of this conclusion and its conse-

quences, has been felt to be overwhelming; when it has seemed to sink into nothingness every other subject, and to paralyse every movement of the mind but that which had a direct reference to it; when our hearts have quivered under a sense of immortality, and the complexion it may wear for us. Even Balaam could cry out in the passionate impulse of such an hour as this, "May I die the death of the righteous!" But such thoughts are too often as a flash that illuminates the mind for an instant, and passes; as it was with him. They are like those of the night-watches, generated by silence, and solitude, and darkness, which the cock-crowing, with its sights, and sounds, and busy activity, disperses and puts effectually to flight. But let us cherish these visions, till we have taught them to dwell in some degree on our spirits. There are means of encouraging them, and giving them permanence, and there are means of extinguishing them altogether.

Let us review *e. g.* from time to time the evidences of Revelation, as we have been doing however imperfectly to-day, and think on their *cumulative* amount. It is impossible, after such an employment of our minds, not to feel that they fail to move men only because they are neglected and put aside, or not regarded in the aggregate. It is impossible for a reasonable being not to perceive that the hazard of running counter to such a body of testimony is enormous—the folly of doing so, when the stake is such as it is, incredible, if we did not see it.

Let us resolutely walk according to it; make it the rule of our lives; pray, and not faint; mortify our members which are upon the earth; have charity among ourselves; be not high-minded, but fear; do, in short, God's will, and then we "shall know of the doe-

trine whether it be of God." Our obedience will confirm our faith, and dispose us to cleave to it. Our habits will conspire with it, and as *they* gather strength, so will our Creed. On the other hand, let us live in defiance or neglect of the precepts of the Gospel, and we shall have planted within us a lying spirit, whose business it will be to persuade us that it is false; we shall have retained a perpetual pleader in our own breasts, to make out a case against it; and our passions will back its voice, and applaud its sophistries. Above all, let us bear in mind the need we have of it, even as our natural conscience would suggest; how ill we can afford to let it go. Let us call up the past. What an arrear of debt to be discharged—to be paid or to be forgiven—does it present! What sins, secret and presumptuous! How can we go before God, awful as he is, guilty as are we, with them all upon our heads, without terror—without terror—before God, in whose sight sin, we may be sure, is an abomination to a degree we cannot even conceive. I say we may be sure; for is it not manifestly the very principle in the world that deranges his merciful plans, disturbs his orderly government, defies his glorious attributes? What are we to do to put ourselves again right with him, if there be no Gospel to trust in, no Mediator to invoke, no Redeemer to cast our burden on? If we stand on our own merits, and challenge him to deal with us on the terms, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay?" especially if it should turn out that it will not be with us as with those to whom no offer of the Gospel had been made; that they will not have had sin; but that we having stumbled at the stone shall therefore be broken by it; or, worse, having provoked it to fall on us, shall be ground by it to powder.



May Almighty God who has instructed his Church with the heavenly doctrine of the Evangelists, give us grace, that being not like children, carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be *established* in the truth of his holy Gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## SERMON II.

Preached at Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge, Nov. 9, 1851.

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ON UNFAITHFULNESS TO THE REFORMATION.

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1 THESS. V. 21.

*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

It has been urged as a reproach against our Church by vast numbers of persons of late, with great vehemence and warmth of declamation, that it has ceased to be faithful to the principles of the Reformation; and that its members are content to live by it and betray it. In some cases this may have been the fact, but those cases I dismiss. It is of others that I am thinking in the present Sermon, as will be readily perceived by the nature of the remarks I am about to submit to you.

It will not then, I trust, be an unprofitable use of our time to consider a little what these principles of the Reformation actually are, and whether the reproach is merited to the extent it has been dealt out; more especially if I can thus draw the attention of my younger hearers to the course which, as it seems to me at least, the Church *really* holds, when it obeys the helm of the Reformation.

The object will be conveniently attained by casting an eye on the manner of proceeding adopted by the Reformers in their conduct of that great enterprise; the substance of that proceeding seeming to be very well comprised in the Apostle's maxim, "to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good;" as our duty

at the present moment, with respect to their handiwork, is also pointed out by the same.

The material then, it must ever be remembered, on which the Reformers had to employ themselves, was the Church as it had descended to their times. That was the subject which lay before them. They set themselves to prove all things in it. They did not sit down to invent, but to examine. None were more competent to do so. They were identified with the religious system they had to pass in review. They had gone through its several grades, from the lowest to the more exalted. They were intimately conversant with the character of that system; its apostolical rise; its mixed progress; its actual condition; its failings, and, what was more, its virtues. They did not desire to make the Reformation a schism, and to trouble the minds of those who should come after them, and succeed to their inheritance, with the doubt, whether they were within the pale of the Church or no; but they desired to make it, what the name implied, a revision and correction of the *abuses* of the Church; of that Church, which had stood from the beginning, and which was to stand to the end of time. They were men—at least the leaders of them—of great theological and ecclesiastical learning. They lay in the line of its tradition. It had devolved upon them from a series of ages; an element which they had in common with many, with most, of the chief churchmen of their day. They had, besides, personally drunk deep of the studies appropriate to their calling; and had evidently enjoyed the means of laying in large stores of such knowledge, from whatever quarter derived. Even their arguments preserved in Fox, were other testimony wanting, prove it. Bishop Jewel too, we may be sure, must have received the rudiments of those

vast acquirements which enabled him to produce the Apology, and the Defence of it, under some plan of teaching in use before the Reformation.

Standing in this position, and possessed of these resources, they proceeded to execute their high and most delicate trust. They turned to the Church's Confession of Faith—one of its fundamentals, if any there were—and they saw it mainly embodied in its Three Creeds. They examined these creeds with Scripture and Antiquity for their tests. They felt them to be agreeable to Scripture, and to be of the most ancient date; to be traceable, wholly or in part, in substance or in words, to all but Apostolic times, if not to Apostolic times; to be the Church's formularies almost, or altogether, from the first; to be her original interpretation of Scripture on cardinal questions that might admit of dispute. They retained them therefore as they stood. On the other hand, they rejected such additions as had been made to these Creeds in later and more corrupt times, and which remained to be riveted on the Church by the Council of Trent, as spurious and unbinding; thus proving all, but only holding fast that which was good; and then transmitting it to us to hold fast too.

And yet the churchmen who do hold fast these Creeds, and feel that they are calculated to stop out much error, and assert many capital truths; who appeal to them, and teach by them; are declaimed against by those who actually regard them as so many unworthy restrictions on the right of private judgment, (the badge of the Reformation according to their reading of it), as men who are not acting in the spirit of the Reformation, and who would substitute the dogmas of a religious despotism for the liberty of thought purchased by the blood of the martyrs.

The Reformers turned to the Church's Sacraments. They set themselves to prove them, still with Scripture and Antiquity for their tests. These they did not accept as they found them. They saw in them subjects for discrimination. They did not boldly denounce them in the gross. There was not much with which they had to deal that could be treated thus summarily; at least they ventured to think so; but they weighed them in the balance, making a difference. They selected two from amongst them as having a character of their own; distinct from that of all the rest; of higher and more imperative authority. They felt that Scripture gave them this pre-eminence; that whatever sanction it might afford to some or all of the rest, it was of another kind from that which it gave to Baptism and the Supper of the Lord; that it represents them as appointed by our Lord himself, as means of grace, as pledges of its reception, as necessary to all; a combination of qualities not meeting in any other of these ordinances. They perceived that primitive antiquity confirmed this judgment; that however, in a popular sense, it may assign to others the name of Sacrament, it presumes a virtue of their own to belong to these two.

Nor is this all. These *two* Sacraments again they further set themselves to prove, still using the same tests as before. They in general acquiesced in the Church's construction of one of them, Baptism; that it is the laver of the New Birth; because such they felt to be the plain sense of Scripture when speaking of Baptism, special pleading apart; and the uninterrupted testimony of the Church of all ages, from the very institution of the rite down to their own day; no testimony on any point of theological controversy clearer, fuller, or more constant. They guarded their acquiescence in



the Church's construction of the other Sacrament, the Lord's Supper; holding indeed, as had been hitherto held, that it was a memorial of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and also that in it was received Christ's body and blood; but understanding this latter in a spiritual and not a corporal sense; a conclusion which they still grounded on Scripture, confirmed by antiquity; on Scripture, which could not be so interpreted as to be inconsistent with itself; or so literally interpreted as to contradict the evidence of the senses, on which evidence, after all, the very belief in Christianity partially rests, even as our Lord himself taught; on antiquity, which bears witness to the faith of the Church having been such as they supposed, at a period when mistake on such a subject could not be possible.

Thus they put things to proof, and held fast what stood the proving, again commending the same to us. And yet multitudes of persons who attach to these ordinances no such reverential and mysterious meaning as is ascribed to them by the Reformers; who see in Baptism little but a rite of initiation, and in the Eucharist nothing but a memorial, bid churchmen, who acknowledge in them what the Reformers did, and no more, to stand by the principles of the Reformation, and be true to their Church.

The other sacraments, as they had been long called, they proved in like manner; and accordingly they deposed "Confession" from the rank of a sacrament, and did not compel it before communion, as they had once done; but they encouraged the future communicant when making his preparation for the Lord's table, to "go to the minister if he be troubled in conscience," and "open to him his grief;" they were for the minister "moving the sick man," under similar circumstances,

“to make a special confession of his sins;” and in both cases with a view to receiving absolution from the priest, who is furnished with forms accordingly. For they maintained the power of binding and loosing under God to be committed to the priest, considering our Lord’s words addressed to his disciples, to be of perpetual, and not of temporary force; “Whose soever sins ye remit they shall be remitted to them, and whose soever sins ye retain they shall be retained;” spoken as they were under the faith of the promise, “that he would be with them *alway*, even unto the end of the world;” and those words they actually introduced, as a very essential ingredient, into the service of ordination: In all this still using Scripture and the Primitive Church for their tests of the old persuasion, holding fast the results they indicated, and transmitting the same to us. And yet churchmen who have received these conclusions at their hands, and cleave to them, are assailed by numbers of persons who themselves rail at confession under any circumstances, and scoff at the idea of priestly absolution, as craft, with the cry, be true to the principles of the Reformation, and do not eat the bread of the Reformed Church, whilst you preach the doctrines of the Romish.

The Reformers turned to the consideration of “Penance,” and this they proved in the same way; and this they displaced as a sacrament also. But though they did not insist upon it in the same terms, or in the same shape as they found it insisted upon in the Church they were handling; yet under the name of repentance, which is another translation of *penitentia*, and a very wide word, they enjoined it as earnestly as it had been ever enjoined before under a different name; nor did they altogether shrink from the old aspect and old

designation of it ; for they took occasion to affirm in the Communion-Service, that to put persons who stood convicted of notorious sin to “open penance,” in Lent, however disused the practice, was a discipline, the restoration of which was much to be wished ; the Primitive Church, as they said, having sanctioned it : and in the 33rd Article they declared, that “the person which, by open denunciation of the Church is rightly cut off from the unity of the Church and excommunicated, ought to be taken of the whole multitude of the faithful, as a heretic and publican, until he be openly reconciled by *penance*, and received into the Church by a judge that hath authority.” And yet the complaint is loud on the part of numbers who constitute themselves the true representatives of the Reformation, against the churchman who adopts these sentiments of the Reformers in the most qualified degree ; and much is he censured for deserting the standard of the martyrs, when he ventures even to approach these sentiments, however remotely, or presumes, by exhortation to acts of self-humiliation, to interfere with their liberty secured to them, as they say, at the Reformation.

They proved the sacrament of “Orders.” That too they excluded from the title of Sacrament, as not satisfying the definition of the term which they had laid down on what they thought sufficient grounds ; but they taught that it is the ordinance which imparts Christ’s commission and authority to administer the Word and Sacraments in the Church ; the Ordination-Service running to that effect ; that it is requisite no man should execute the functions of bishop, priest, or deacon, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted, according to that service ; or, as the Reformers of 1662 explain it, that no man should be accounted or taken to be a



lawful bishop, priest, or deacon, in the Church of England, who had not been episcopally ordained; that holy Scripture and ancient authors make it evident to all who diligently read them, that there have been three orders in the Church from the Apostles' time; that the angels, therefore, who presided over the Churches of Asia in St John's day, were the bishops of those Churches; that they were the same, or succeeded by the same, as those of whom Ignatius speaks; that Clemens refers to such a succession as universal and of apostolical appointment; that Irenæus gives the several links of it in one principal Church, from the Apostles to his own contemporaries, and intimates his ability to do the like in all other Churches—as Eusebius actually does in four; that both he and Cyprian, and in fact all the primitive writers, hold the Churches close to these successions; and represent those who renounce them and break away from them, and yet profess themselves Christian communities, to be heretical. This was the train of evidence the Reformers must have pursued in their process of “proving” orders, as is plain from their appeal to Scripture and ancient authors; and to this they meant to direct the attention of the Church ever after, by leaving that appeal on record in their Preface to the Ordination-Service. They followed these premises up by begging of God in their Litany to illuminate bishops, priests, and deacons, these teachers of the Church, and to deliver it from heresy and schism, or rents in the doctrine and discipline they taught.

And yet churchmen who concur with the Reformers in all these conclusions, and themselves insist on them in turn, are actually exhorted by persons who deny or disregard the distinction of orders in the Church, who make light of an Apostolical Succession, who will not be

persuaded that heretics exist, and yet contend for every man choosing his own religion, heretic, all the while, meaning only one who does so in defiance and disparagement of the Church—though distorted in its common acceptance by associations with the Marian and other persecutions, when it was as penal to be a heretic as to be a murderer;—I say, churchmen who concur with the Reformers in all these conclusions are exhorted by persons who dispute them all, to be true to the principles of their Church, and not betray the simplicity of the Reformation.

The Reformers turned to the Ritual of the Old Church, to its Missal, Breviary, and numerous Service-books; these it put to proof, still with the same tests, Scripture and Antiquity. The creeds, I have said, they adopted altogether; those clauses excepted which had been already added, and were soon to be enforced at the Council of Trent. For these creeds satisfied their tests. They provided that these creeds should be constantly repeated in the public worship of the congregation, as they had before been. They applied this plumb-line, as it were, to the Church perpetually, that any aberration in fundamentals at least might be guarded against in the very beginning. They retained the service for the Two Sacraments to a very great extent; expunging from that of the Eucharist the passages which upheld the corporal presence, and the intercession of saints; and in their addition to these forms, (for some they introduced), it will be found on examination, they were chiefly governed by a desire to bring the Sacraments more *home* to the understandings and hearts of the parties; to turn their attention more closely to the personal concern they themselves had in them, the part they had themselves to perform; strengthening the

subjective, though not to the material damage of the objective aspect of them—a most wholesome provision, no doubt, and one which the defects of past times called for—but the staple of the old forms, I repeat, they after all retained, accounting them, as I have said, thus far true to God's Word; and capable of being traced to an age the most primitive, both by fragments of those services still subsisting in the writings of the first centuries, and by more entire liturgical documents of a date, later perhaps than this as a whole, but still most remote, and belonging to various quarters of Christendom. They held fast the portions of Scripture appointed for Epistles and Gospels in the old Service-books, hardly in any case changing them. Were not they good? The choicest passages of the one book—passages too, it is singular enough to observe, which condemned many of the abuses that had crept into the system of the Church, and yet were read every Sabbath-day; but read in a language not understood of the people, which was in truth, I believe, the source of the mediæval Church's aberrations beyond any other thing. They held fast the Collects; were not they good? who can doubt it who feels now his heart warming to them? the Collects, with the exception of those for Saints' days, which naturally had to be re-cast, and the *example* of the Saint in most instances substituted for his *intercession*, which was probably the feature of the prayer before. They ranged over the Breviary and other Service-books, and proved them; gathering out of them a large portion of the Morning and Evening Prayer—their field here wider than before; here, all the seven daily services laid under contribution, for such was the number that had hitherto, theoretically at least, obtained; a number, which pleading for its preference the practice

of the Psalmist, who exclaims, "seven times a day do I praise thee," had been long in possession of the Church. They constituted the Psalms the leading feature of the Morning and Evening Prayer, as they had previously been of the seven forms—only they directed them to be recited now once in the month, whereas before they had been recited once in the week. Did they not here hold fast that which was good? What book in all Scripture so acceptable at all times, in all moods of mind, as this? so fitted to animate day after day the devotions of the congregation? They adopted Lessons from Scripture too; for lessons also they found in those same repositories, though these they greatly extended; and where formerly a few verses sufficed, there was now a chapter—a sound improvement and agreeable to primitive usage—but still the suggestion was there.

They took in hand the *occasional Services* of the Old Church in like manner, making them the basis of the corresponding ones; still proving, still rejecting, still holding fast.

The result of their labours in this department on the whole was, the substance of the Book of Common Prayer; which, constructed as it thus was, became a depository of traditional doctrine, pure and primitive; any additional elements inserted in it, not being of an amount to affect this character of it, whether those elements were derived from continental service-books, themselves compiled with a certain respect for antiquity which had not yet expired even in Germany; or from a contribution of the day, which still would be tinctured with the thought and phraseology of older times, when prayers deserving of the name were wont to be made.

Nor was even this all. Our Reformers did not omit to reconstruct the Calendar and Rubric of the Church;



but still on the same principle; that of proving all, and holding fast the good; still guiding themselves by Scripture and Primitive Antiquity, where both guides were to be had; by Primitive Antiquity, where Scripture was silent; where both, by long-established custom, when it was deemed innocent and edifying. Thus they retained daily service, though they did not enjoin it so often in the day; frequent celebration of the Eucharist, though less frequent; Saints' days, though reducing the number of saints, and admitting none to that title but those who had an indisputable right to it; Fast days and seasons of humiliation, though making them of less frequent recurrence than before; influenced in these revisions, which are all in one direction, in some degree probably, by the belief that the religious feelings of the country had in reality been overwrought by too incessant appeals to them, the form superseding the spirit; by the difficulty of securing the necessary leisure in the increasing demands for active exertion in order to secure a bread; and by the diminution in the ecclesiastical body contingent on the new position of the Church.

Still even here the animus of the Reformers is apparent; perhaps as apparent as in any department of their proceedings; the animus of modifying, and not extinguishing prior usage; of proving all, and holding fast the good.

Well—Churchmen, those I am contemplating, now venerate these results; cordially adopt this Prayer-Book; hail it as the Church's voice; conform themselves to its instructions, not in a puerile and pragmatistical pertinacity about the trivial, but in a conscientious desire to hold fast the substantial matters of it; and they are taxed with being false to the principles of the Reformation by persons who themselves regard the Prayer-Book not as



a sacred deposit of Tradition from the beginning, which the Reformers had sifted and affirmed, but simply as a book of human composition, to be dealt with as any other; who reject it as a companion to the Bible, and an authentic comment on it, holding the Bible and the Bible only, interpreted according to every man's own sense of it, well informed or ill, to be the Religion of the Reformation; or, if they accept the Prayer-Book at all as illustrating the rule of faith, who would pare down its authority to that of the Articles; almost the only part of it of purely modern growth; as though the Articles intended to exclude from the Church, Clergy whose unsound opinions might disturb it—many such opinions being abroad in the days when they were compiled;—required to be signed by the Clergy only, and rarely appointed even to be read in the audience of the people; were to be taken as bespeaking the minds of the Reformers more fully and imperatively, than these time-honoured services of the Church, no less enjoined upon the Clergy than the Articles; and besides this, put by the Reformers into the hands of the people for their daily use, their daily edification; in which they were themselves required to take a very ample part; some or other of them made to blend themselves with all the most touching and impressive incidents of their ordinary lives;—they are thus taxed, I say, by persons who find something suspicious in frequent Services, and frequent Eucharists, with a decent ceremonial and no more; who are jealous of any pious respect paid to the Festivals of the Saints; who are adverse to the observance of seasons of humiliation; in short, who renounce a great number of those distinctive conclusions which the Reformers, after proof gone through, held fast themselves, and bound us by such bonds as they hoped would be effec-

tual to hold fast also, and who yet produce themselves for exponents of the Reformation.

Truly it may be said of the Reformation, as was said of Liberty, What excesses have been committed under its name! But surely it is not by thus divesting our Church, as the parties to whom I have alluded are disposed to divest it, of all its *positive* features, and by reducing it, as they would do, to a mere asserter of *negatives*, that we are representing the Church of the Reformers; the very name of *Re-former* forbids the notion; still less, that we are establishing a Church which can be lasting; and above all, lasting in the face of a Church, compact as is that of Rome. It would have been a strange Reformation that should have gone upon the principle of protesting against every thing, and affirming nothing; of proving all things, and holding nothing fast. It is not by those who are only prepared to express doubts,—no task more easy, or requiring less attainment—that a Church can be long sustained: doubts about the soundness of the clauses of the several Creeds; doubts about the doctrines of Regeneration in Baptism, and of the Real Presence in the Eucharist; doubts about the expediency of Confession in any case, the efficacy of Absolution, the validity of Orders, the reality of the Succession, the authority of Episcopacy, and the like; who tell us that much may be said on both sides of such questions—however little they may have themselves, perhaps, applied to the study of them, to ‘the *proving* them,’ which would often end in their holding them faster;—and who warn us that it is not seemly to speak with any confidence on such high matters, which had better be left open; it is not, I say, by men of this class, however able, that a Church can be long upheld; it was not such men who constituted the

inflexible Christians of the first centuries, and who stamped their creed upon the world; nor was it such who stood to the stake at the Reformation, and fixed our Church nearly what it is, making it express itself as it does upon those points; still less was it such who conducted the final revision of it in 1662. But some perhaps will ponder, whether it may not have been the influence which such persons have since had in the Church, that has rendered modern theology so jejune, so precarious, so indefinite; that has subdued and neutralised our commentaries on the Scriptures, where they are understood to speak with any official authority, till they have shrunk from declaring an opinion upon almost every point on which you desire to have one; that has relaxed the hold of the Church upon the people by never letting them see what it is; and has made a way for the appearance of a party in it, supposed by many now to possess a dangerous power, but who acquired that power, be it what it may, by adopting for their watchword, "If the trumpet give an *uncertain* sound, who shall prepare him for the battle?"

Credit may be due to persons who hold latitudinarian opinions—I use the term in no invidious sense, but simply because no other will express my idea—when those opinions are the result of long and patient examination of intricate questions, probably calling for much historical research, which is no doubt true of some of those of theology; in that case we may well regard them as candid men, who having taken pains to master arguments and objections, find a difficulty in striking the balance and making up their minds; but the very censures launched against honest churchmen by many of the parties I have been contemplating would seem to prove that they have been at no trouble to acquaint themselves

with the simplest principles of the Church they are pronouncing upon with so much authority; and accordingly our sentiments towards them are naturally very different; we are tempted to regard them as persons who are speaking very freely on great questions which it would appear they have not made it a conscience to study; questions in which the highest interests of the Church are at stake, in which the feelings of many are deeply interested; and whose crude declamations would not have been tolerated, much less encouraged, had the subject of them been medicine or law instead of theology, the health or the estate instead of the soul.

It may be open to debate whether the Reformers went far enough in their revision of the Church; whether they should not have disregarded all distinction of orders in the ministry as nourishing vain-glory; whether they should not have repudiated all peculiar virtue in the office as tending to priestcraft; whether they should not have extinguished one, or more, or all of the old creeds as undue restraints on the right of private judgment, and pronounced every man's own opinion of the meaning of Scripture to be Scripture to him, whatever might be the confusion that would ensue; whether they should not have rejected tradition utterly and altogether, and run the risk of not being able to prove a canon; whether they should not have created a Prayer-book instead of reconstructing one, and renounced forms of devotion, fragments of which reach to the age next the Apostles. All this may be certainly open to debate, and has been debated by sects in this country who have decided these points in the affirmative, "considering it always imperfect reformation that doth but shear and not flay\*." The course of those sects is intelligible;

\* Hooker, v. 65. 1.



they abjure the Reformers, and look upon them, in the language of the most illustrious man amongst them, as "time-serving and halting prelates:" that is intelligible; but it is not so easy to understand how others who would resent being supposed to be of them, and yet adopt these same conclusions, actually claim these same Reformers peculiarly for their own; and not only so, but denounce all who do not agree with them in this strange reading of those venerable persons, as traitors to their Church, and untrue to the Reformation.

So far from shunning or discouraging all reference to the Reformation, I cannot imagine judicious lovers of their Church wishing it better than that the eyes of the country should be riveted to that great crisis. It is the very remedy, under God, for the times. There is no telling the amount of misapprehension it would remove. It would render it necessary for men to plant themselves in the position of the Reformers; to occupy the ground which they took up, in order to realise their views; having lost the arrow to fix themselves once more on the selfsame spot, as the archer, and shoot again in order to find it. It would save them from construing their intentions by consequences which they did not and could not anticipate; from giving their thoughts a bias which the circumstances they were moving amongst could not impart. It would compel them to put aside the excessive impulse communicated to the nation by the fires of Smithfield, which naturally maddened it against Rome to a degree which the Reformers would have taken alarm at; by the great Rebellion, which further destroyed the reverence for many things which the Reformers had taught it to respect; by the Revolution, which still more contributed to weaken principles which they had encouraged; by the movements of John Wesley, which



wrought, and wrought very powerfully, in the same direction. The Reformers did not see these events, or foresee most of them. They, like Agricola, if I may venture upon the comparison, were spared by the period at which they died the consciousness of evils at hand. For however mixed with good all the incidents were in the present case, the effect of them on the whole was certainly to drift the Church very far from the moorings the Reformers had taken up for her; and to make it extremely difficult for us now to return to them—an attempt, however, which we must suppose in common consistency they would approve, and lament the obstacles which interrupt it.

By all means let us look to the Reformers, and learn of them. They proved all things, at a time when more was in commotion to disturb the process than even at present; and they held fast that which was good, when it was even harder than now to hold fast any thing. They did not 'run to their work with the shell upon their heads,' to use a phrase of Baxter's, but qualified themselves for it by wholesome self-distrust, close and accurate study of the Scriptures, and of the ecclesiastical records of past ages, which led to a knowledge of the same; it being related of Archbishop Cranmer that he had made himself master of the Scriptures, Fathers, and Councils; monuments indeed of such his diligence remaining in some manuscript volumes to this day; and were but the memorials of the Conferences preserved, which resulted in the formation of the First Prayer-Book, and other documents of the Reformation, but that above all, I doubt not we should be struck, greatly struck, with the vast resources of appropriate scholarship they had at their command; those chips, had they been forthcoming, (however superfluous the proof), would have made further manifest the superior

character both of the workman and the material; and served to put many to shame who undertake to correct such labours of such men with so little preparation for it. By all means let us look to the Reformers. They did not squander their shafts at the Church of Rome in a random flight, leaving them to wound friend or foe as it might happen, but directed them with a cool, sagacious, and steady aim at the joints of its harness and there staid. They preserved the outworks, as well as the hold itself of the Gospel, for the Gospel's sake; the casket as well as the jewel, for the jewel's sake; the pillar and ground of the truth, as well as the truth itself, for the truth's sake: and accordingly, whilst the Reformation on the Continent, conducted by other and less judicious hands, in a different spirit, and on Protestant principles properly so called, is now I suppose a comparative wreck, the Church of England maintains its integrity, presents a front against the Church of Rome, and against every form of Dissent, which the serious jealousy it excites in those quarters proves to be felt as most formidable; and gives token of possessing within itself an expansive force equal, if not repressed and not wasted, to the severe demands of the times and the country upon it;—equal to the reconquering for the Cross of our unwieldy and overgrown cities; to the virtuous education of our swarming children; to the consecrating of our manufactories; to the reducing of our revolutionary malcontents; to the Christianizing of our vast colonies; and to the reflecting through them over almost all the regions of the heathen world the pure light of the Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all glory, might, majesty, and dominion, now and ever. Amen.

# SERMON III.

Preached at Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge, Nov. 16, 1851.

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ON THE UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

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1 THESS. V. 21.

*Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.*

I HAVE already applied this precept of the Apostle to the case of Revealed Religion itself; to the duty of investigating its truth; and having satisfied ourselves of that, of accounting it the chief concern of life, and accordingly cleaving to it with a stedfastness of purpose proportionate to its worth.

I have applied it also to the case of that Form of revealed religion which we ourselves accept; to the duty of examining its history, which is in fact its evidence; of satisfying ourselves as to what it is and what it is not; and of not lightly relinquishing, simply because people will have it so, articles of faith, methods of worship, and canons of Constitution, which have come down to us recommended by the most primitive use.

I propose at present to apply the precept to a more specific case, in which the interests of religion in this country are deeply concerned,—a case of a very practical character,—and as a practical question only I shall handle it,—a question suggested by the signs of the times, not fit perhaps to be submitted to every audience, but not out of place here.

A few years ago it would have been deemed superfluous to have offered a word of apology for the union

of Church and State, as it is called, and to have pointed out some of the many obvious advantages which were believed to accrue from that relation.

It was taken for granted that it was a triumph of Christianity when kings became its nursing-fathers, and queens its nursing-mothers; that it was still improving its position as it advanced through poverty, through neglect, through persecution, up to the seat of power; that it was a step in the right direction when it passed on from the centurion to those of Cæsar's household; that its functions became more effective, as its functionaries became more and more men under authority.

Certain it is that St Paul, in his instructions to Timothy for the guidance of the Church, and probably (from the wording of the passage) for the guidance of the public service of the Church, expressly exhorts that "first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; . . . for *kings* . . . that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty\*;" and no less certain that traces of such a clause as is here suggested, present themselves amongst the very earliest we have of a Liturgy; as though it was a leading object with the apostles, and with the first followers of the apostles, to establish a friendly feeling, so to speak, between the Church and State. Insomuch that an objection which has been sometimes alleged against our Prayer-Book, that its character is too courtly, is in fact derived from its still retaining this feature amongst so many others, of its primitive origin—a desire to bring the secular powers into cordial alliance with the ecclesiastical.

But another spirit seems now to be coming over us; once disposed, as we were, to rest content, perhaps even

\* 1 Tim. ii. 2.

passive under certain defects of our Church system, defects arising out of this alliance, for it is not to be denied that such there are, and to represent it as more perfect than it is; we are now in danger of rushing to the other extreme, of settling our thoughts upon those defects alone, and having hit the blot, seeing nothing besides.

Accordingly, Separate Church and State, is now the cry, started certainly in most instances by those who wish well to neither, but not altogether disapproved, it should seem, by others who are amongst the Church's most earnest friends; who would make any personal sacrifice to strengthen it; but who regard it as in the condition of Israel amongst the taskmasters, and think that they are in fact serving it best by endeavouring to get the people thence.

I shall not dwell at any length on the necessity there is for mutual forbearance in the carriage of the secular and ecclesiastical powers each towards the other, if their union is to be of advantage to either. It is like that mystical one of marriage, which sheds blessings unnumbered upon both parties where they are satisfied to be somewhat blind to each other's faults; but which turns to a bitter curse for either when self-restraint is forgotten.

Without meaning to vindicate any stretch of its authority, supposed to have been assumed of late years by the State in its dealings with the Church; and which, by touching the consciences of some, has created heart-burnings which seek relief in the rejection of a yoke esteemed by them intolerable, at all hazards; I would nevertheless, on the other hand, suggest that it is not a matter for wonder if the State watches with solicitude the working of a principle of such prodigious



force as the religious ; so irresistible, so uncontrollable, when once effectually roused to action ; and yet, sacred as it is, not incapable, it must be confessed, of misapplication and abuse ; more especially when that principle has at its command considerable endowments ; an organized constitution ; and the advantage of close contact with every spot however conspicuous and however obscure, through the length and breadth of the land : that though such jealousy *may* spring out of the mere vulgar ambition of a worldly spirit, which cannot bear to see power deposited in any hands but its own, yet that it may also arise out of a dread of ecclesiastical encroachment honestly entertained, and which has been entertained, as we know, by statesmen zealous for the true interests of the Church beyond all suspicion : that whilst men and not angels have to wield the influences of the Church, other motives for the direction of them *may* enter in, besides such as are purely spiritual ; and whilst men and not devils have to wield the influences of the State, other motives for the direction of them again, may have a place, besides such as are purely sublunary.

In the dispassionate temper then, prompted by these reflections, let us turn to some of the *practical* advantages which the Church derives from its present connexion with the State, and consider whether we should risk them in heat and in haste, and before the very last effort has been made to redress by less violent means such inconveniences, as may, no doubt, accompany it too. It is idle to expect any estate in this world to be without alloy ; the matter is, so to frame and dispense it as to exclude from it the utmost possible.

I will put then the extreme case, as being the ultimate issue to which an agitation of this kind tends,

however it may be modified ; as serving best to expose the inconveniences which attach to it, however short it may in fact stop of realising them all ; and as accordingly calculated to forewarn us effectually of the nature of the experiment on which some are disposed to venture, and so to forearm us whilst the crisis is distant. I will understand by the separation of Church and State the abdication of its present social position by the Church : I will understand that the Bishops shall be selected by the Church, and appointed to their dioceses without any interference of the State : that the Clergy shall labour in the districts assigned to them by these Bishops, no longer as the sole rightful occupants of our parish-churches, but as missionaries within the limits prescribed to them : and that all, both Bishops and Clergy, shall be supported, as in primitive times, when necessity dictated this mode of maintenance, and the impression produced by the miraculous gifts of the Church as well as other causes promoted its efficacy, by the voluntary contributions of a Christian people.

It is not to be denied that under such circumstances the Church would have it in its power to select for her rulers those in whom she had the most confidence ; that she would be able to call synods for the adjusting of her Articles of faith and practice at her pleasure ; and that she would be in a condition to enforce discipline both on her ministers and congregation, so far as discipline can be enforced by the influence of opinion independently of law ; great benefits, no doubt, all of them ; and however imperfectly secured, it may be suspected, under such provisions, still taking effect, we will suppose, in some degree. But on the other hand, let us consider what we may have to relin-

quish in this Reformation, before we strike the balance. I cannot but believe that one fallacy pervades the whole of such a scheme—the fallacy of supposing that under this or any such new arrangement the Clergy and the Congregation will remain substantially in the same position and relations as at present; that things in other respects will go on much as they do now, and yet the Church be relieved of various weights which now depress her; that the Ark, in the main what it is, but lightened of its load, will float higher upon the waters, and thus ride more safely on the troubled seas which now beat around her; in short, that the Church will lose nothing, and gain much.

But will the Clergy be the same after this or any such revolution? Will they be the learned body they now are when the temporal incentives to learning are withdrawn? I say withdrawn, for who can believe that spontaneous offerings will long fill the place of fixed and substantial endowments such as ours; especially with the fact before us, that such offerings have not nearly sufficed to supply even the shortcomings of those endowments; and that with far from a grudging and niggardly spirit abroad, it has been hitherto found impossible to overtake the spiritual destitution of the country, and furnish adequate religious instruction to districts the most desolate? not to speak of the case of colleges and schools, those most necessary foundations for a Church that is to flourish, but requiring a strength for their achievement which even as things now are we cannot at all command—numbers of such institutions unexceptionable in themselves, and having for their object undeniable benefits to the Church, languishing for want of means at this moment? A burst of enthusiasm might effect wonders for a while,

but enthusiasm is an unsafe basis on which to rear a structure that is to be lasting.

Do I need excuse for drawing your attention in the pulpit to the fiscal view of a subject so exalted? Alas! how soon does the fiscal question of necessity combine itself with the progress of the Gospel! It is true, in the very first instance, the Apostles are enjoined to go forth "without a purse," lest, perhaps, they should invite aggression whilst the cause was yet tender; "but now," says our Lord again, when the time came to organise the Church, and bring the world into subjection, "let him that hath a purse take it." I only reach the fourth chapter of the Acts, and am still within a few months of the day of Pentecost, when I read of the possessors of lands and houses selling them, and bringing the price, and laying it at the Apostles' feet, and of "distribution being made to every man according as he had need." And from that time forwards the Gospel History never allows me to lose sight of the question. It enters almost immediately afterwards into the sternest exercise of St Peter's miraculous powers. It is at the bottom of the murmuring of the two sections of the infant Church, and the institution of a permanent order in the Church to silence it. It is the subject of much solicitude and many regulations both with respect to collection, distribution, and object, with the Apostle Paul. We need not be more transcendental than that Apostle; who, if he tells of his translation into the third heaven, and his admission to hear unspeakable words, tells also of the manner in which "the gatherings" were to be made; the elders and widows to be supplied out of them; the Fund, in short, to be raised, dispensed, and protected from misappropriation. And if there be one thing more than another which seems to have been

felt to be an active engine for good in the working of the sub-apostolical Church, it is this same Fund or Offertory; and if there was one duty thought to be more imperative than another upon its officers, it was the creation, continuance, and management of it.

To proceed then with my argument. Will parents be prepared to consecrate the talents of a hopeful boy to a life of virtuous poverty, and humble station, when other callings, they too honest and honourable and gainful withal, are soliciting them on all sides? In a Church where there is no *settled* provision, and even *liberal* provision, will there be leisure? and where there is no leisure, will there be scholarship? The very term "School," significant of leisure? Are we prepared to give up the field of our National Theology, the glory of our literature, and instead of emulating the labours of a Jewel, a Hooker, a Pearson, a Sanderson, a Bull, reduce ourselves to a condition which shall be incapable of even appreciating them? Are the controversies in which our Church is likely to be engaged such as can be conducted with success by raw and unlettered disputants? Have we not of late had samples of religious argument maintained by volunteer polemicists, laymen many of them, enough to satisfy us that no Church in the world could long survive the aid of such champions? and would we wilfully commit our own to none other?

It will not be contended, I am sure, by any enlightened friend of the Church, whilst musing on its separation from the State, and the consequences, that this sound scholarship, this large knowledge of the Scriptures, and of Primitive Tradition as illustrative of the Scriptures, bring no particular advantage to the population at large; bear no extraordinary part in se-



curing the greatest benefit to the greatest number, the motto of the times; when the learning of high places is now taught to find its way through a thousand channels to lower levels, and to trickle, if I may so speak, through all the gradations of our system: and yet, as seems to me, by encouraging such a crisis, he would be helping to stop the wells which send forth such wholesome waters so freely and so far; and in effect, make common cause with those who care little about ecclesiastical lore; and think that the lack of it in our divines will not be felt by the class for whom, and for whom only, they are concerned to make provision; a class who will be content, and more than content, they say, (which I do not dispute,) to slake their thirst at less pure and more vapid waters, and go to the broken cistern as readily as to the whole.

Nor is this all. With the declension of learning amongst our Clergy, will the Church long retain the hold which it now has, almost exclusively, on the education of the people, particularly those classes amongst them who by their station, wealth, intelligence, constitute in a great degree the leaven of the country, and breathe its spirit into the age? And if the Clergy have not turned this enormous privilege to the account they might, and which if they had done, we should possibly have now been spared the necessity of discussing such a subject as that we are upon;—if, I say, the Clergy in times past have not made the most of this golden opportunity for spreading sound opinions, theological and ecclesiastical, in high and in all quarters, it is not yet too late, whilst our Church-system remains in force, to correct the mistake and do better. Have not almost all the statesmen who have wielded the destinies of England for generations, and often, it

must be confessed, vexed the Church by their unfriendly measures, passed through the hands of the Clergy, simply because the Clergy were a learned body; the body in the nation best qualified for imparting to them intelligence and letters? and have not even they, after all, been probably withheld from acts more adverse to it, and to which the times perhaps urged them, by early associations connected with the Church, and early impressions received from it? But let our Clergy be once deposed from the office of communicating liberal education on the scale they now do, and will not public opinion soon bear witness to the effect? Shall we not soon find ourselves living in a land which we should scarcely recognise as the land of our fathers; new codes of thought and action introduced and acknowledged; national character changed; and sentiments and institutions which we should not as yet even dream to be perishable, passing away, to the consternation of those who had contributed to the movement in the honesty of their hearts, and now rue their success?

But if the character and influence of the Clergy would sustain a vast shock by such a disruption of relationship with the State, would not the people suffer in a greater degree still? We now at least possess a Form of Faith, and of Ecclesiastical Constitution, received more or less in every district of the country as a standard; a standard which the members of our Church who have a leaning towards separation profess, I believe, to admit as on the whole representing that branch of the Catholic Church which established itself in England soon after the Apostles' days, and has maintained its continuity unbroken ever since. They acknowledge the pedigree of that Church; they seek for themselves as yet no other; content with that, when only they

shall have released it from certain appliances incidental to it, but not constituting or even affecting its essence. Aberration from that standard as yet goes by the name of dissent; the very term significant of a rule accepted and recognized by the country at large from which it has itself departed; its own features and aspect measured by the nature and degree of its divergency from that rule; the Socinian deviating in one direction; the Wesleyan in another; the Baptist in a third; but all deviating; all regarded by the broad eye of the population in general, nay even by themselves, as seceders from a national confession and usage; seceders, on the ground that private judgment ought to supersede tradition from the beginning, and that every man can conclude for himself better than the Church can conclude for him. I am not now dealing with this as a matter of charge, but as a matter of fact, and am simply saying that the existence of dissent implies the existence of a rule of prescriptive unanimity; even draws attention to that rule; places it in a clear light; exhibits it in the advantageous posture of a principle which is in possession, and which has been in possession time out of mind; a posture which in law is thought to be nearly conclusive of right; and which in all primitive theology is regarded as the strongest argument against the pretensions of heresy. But extinguish your national Church and national confession, and this national standard is removed. The parties who still cleave to it, for many such doubtless there will be, will have their own opinion of their own position; but so far as the national verdict is concerned, they will be simply one sect of many; they will dissent from others, and others will dissent from them, and all men will be dissenters or none, according to the pleasure of the speaker.

I confess it seems to me that the practical effect of this dispensation would be to stir foundations to a most alarming extent; to set all principles afloat; to fill the country with unsanctified strife and debate, to the ruin of quiet and unobtrusive piety, and to the revival of those scandals which are recited in the preamble to the Act of Uniformity, and which it was the object of that Act, passed most eagerly\* under a lively recollection of their magnitude, to put down; that if we had it for our object to prime the country for infidelity, we could not do it more effectually than by reducing all our religious elements to such a state of solution; and further, that as such a condition of things would be intolerable for any long period, if we were desirous of delivering the nation again over to the church of Rome, we could not take surer means; for who would not be disposed to fly for refuge to foundations that seemed immoveable, when all around was heaving; as in volcanic regions the people betake themselves to their church for safety when the earth rocks, though they may be buried in its ruins? and who would fail to feel a sympathy for a changeless system, be its drawbacks what they might, who was smarting under evils which he thought nothing could exceed, arising out of ceaseless change?

I scarcely need pursue this part of my argument into minute details, or picture the ruin of the parochial system which would ensue under these new combinations. The particulars would present themselves at once to every man who has had the charge of a

\* "There cannot be a better evidence of the general affection of the kingdom, than that this Act of Parliament *had so concurrent an approbation of the two Houses of Parliament*, after a suppression of that form of devotion for near twenty years, and the highest discountenance and oppression of all those who were known to be devoted or affected to it."—*The Life of Lord Clarendon*, II, p. 141.



parish himself. The minister no longer moving freely amongst his people as before: whatever obstacles to his success the action of dissent had thrown in his way multiplied manifold: his right of road to every house, that invaluable prerogative of old, lost and gone: the field of his labours, determinate before, now doubtful and ill-defined: the members of his congregation to be picked out by him from amongst numbers, here one and there one: and amidst the various schools of doctrine starting up around him, very many persons, no doubt, indisposed to declare themselves exclusively for any, preferring to be Christians unattached: his commission therefore feeble: his ministerial interposition halting, stealthy, and full of embarrassment: every influence about him tending to irritate him to contention if he be one of the Sons of Thunder, or lull him to inaction if he be fearful and faint-hearted; and in either case true religion the sufferer: his funds, applied hitherto so effectually, so precisely, to the relief of misery, or the support of patient merit, known perhaps only to himself, no longer forthcoming: his position, which brings him into the closest contact with the suffering classes, and at the same time enables him to discriminate thoroughly between honesty and imposture, to discern the spirits in a degree, I scruple not to say, which no other member of society can, no longer capable of being turned to account; for to what purpose is it that he is most conversant with the wants of a district when it is utterly out of his power to minister to them? his thoughts no longer directed to making provision for the lack of service in this neglected nook of his parish or that; for parish he has none, properly speaking; the charge of its religious welfare once strictly imposed upon him, and binding on his con-



science, withdrawn; and were it otherwise, how is he now with his empty purse to take the lead in stimulating his lukewarm neighbours to furnish the chapel, the school-room, and the pastor; for which some forlorn corner under his keeping, peopled however with immortal souls, he is well aware, cries aloud?

Hitherto I have been arguing this question chiefly on *prudential* considerations;—considerations, however, which with all reasonable beings ought to have a great influence in determining conduct; and in the highest and most sacred concerns of all, not less but rather more than in others; “Be ye wise as serpents,” being the injunction of no time-serving teacher. But there is another view to be taken of it, which some who might disregard the former, would respect—the *moral* aspect of it. Perhaps the turn which practically any effort to separate Church and State might take, if it found an issue in any positive result at all, would be a partial *secession* from the Established Church, and the creation of another episcopal Church within our own. Could parties who might meditate such an act satisfy themselves of its innocence? or judging themselves by the rules of the Primitive Church, could they acquit themselves of schism in any attempt to establish a second bishop in a diocese already in possession of another—and where will they find a spot in England which is not in such possession? Is there any ancient canon more express and emphatic than that one bishop, and only one, shall bear rule within his own limits; insomuch that it is objected by a primitive father against certain heretics of his day, who had set up a bishop of their own, that whilst calling themselves evangelical and professing to be Purists, they were overleaping a cardinal maxim of Christian polity, and thereby condemning at once them-

selves and their cause\*? To introduce, or assent to others introducing, a rival prelate into a field already occupied by one who has received undeniable consecration, and cannot be pretended to have surrendered or forfeited his trust, is surely a proceeding as offensive to his conscience, as to acquiesce in the government of the actual occupant of the see, even though he does submit to wear some fetters of the State which it might be well if he could shake off. The conscience of the churchman, it seems to me, will not be set at ease by this provision, but will only change the subject of its upbraidings, and if it suggested prickings before, will apply stings now.

Look to the non-jurors: few persons can revert to the history of that band of brothers, without compassion and respect; but is the precedent encouraging? Were even they altogether happy in their new position, and entirely satisfied with the lawfulness of the step they had ventured to take, or at least to follow up? I think there are symptoms of the contrary. And yet perhaps the provocation to it was greater, and the justification of it less doubtful, than any we can plead. Certain it is that "their counsel and work came to nought," whatever overthrew it; that starting in their course with much public sympathy,—“it required,” we are told, “all the influence of a latitudinarian school of divinity, led by Locke, to counteract it †;”—adorned with much learning, indeed it now constitutes an important shelf of the ecclesiastical library; and select-

\* Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, in writing to Fabius makes it a matter of pleasantry that Novatus should have called himself ὁ ἐκδικητής τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, (Euseb. vi. c. xliii. p. 312;) and yet should not have known that in the Catholic Church there could be only one bishop in one diocese.

† Hallam, *Const. Hist.* III. 148, quoted by Lathbury, p. 85.

ing for their prelates men more than unexceptionable, men who could not have failed to produce an impression on the Church, had they been in their true place; the non-jurors, in spite of all this, soon became "a feeble folk;" their literature expiring with the seceders themselves, or their immediate successors; and their dwindling hierarchy to be traced only by the antiquary, the last vestige of it a subject of speculative curiosity, such as exercises itself amongst naturalists on the ultimate date of a species that has insensibly disappeared. Meanwhile the national Church, deprived in them of its soundest portion, the element which would have helped to keep it comparatively true to primitive and apostolical usage, assumed rapidly that debased and secular aspect which it continued to wear to our own times, but from which it has been of late escaping; and much it is to be feared, that if their mantle should fall upon others in the Church, similar calamitous results would ensue; and that enjoying great power, as such men no doubt would do, whilst they remained within the pale, for effecting good and abating evil, they would carry away with them but little; whilst their departure would be the signal for extreme opinions to put forth all their strength, effacing from our Church many of those features by which it was known to Polycarp and Ignatius, to Irenæus and Cyprian; and substituting in their stead the unprescriptive novelties of Calvin and Knox, or rather perhaps of Wesley and Whitfield. Should they not take into account this consummation before they bid their Church farewell?

Are they then, it will be said, to seek no redress, and by offering no resistance to acts of political aggression, invite more and worse? and by expressing no

sense of the inconvenience of their position imply their entire satisfaction with it?

This is not the necessary alternative. They may pursue their object but by other means—means perhaps more circuitous, but more sure of obtaining the end. If the grievances are real they can plead them with effect: what body in the country more capable of it, or commanding more channels for the purpose than the Clergy? Real grievances indeed, when repeatedly and calmly enforced, plead for themselves till they be removed; and if, in the meanwhile seen to be borne with, not in apathy, but on principle, naturally recommend the complainants to the favourable notice of all reasonable people. *Vincit qui patitur* was the motto of one of our leading churchmen, who effected in his day many changes for the better in the relations of the Church to the State. Have not events transpired of late which may have a tendency to reconcile the State to allowing the Church greater freedom of counsel, agreeably to the spirit of the Royal Declaration itself constantly prefixed to the Articles to this day; seeing that she can use it without indulging in the strife of tongues which had been imputed to her? And are not others in progress calculated to impress on the State the absolute necessity of putting more trust in the Church, as the bulwark fitted to oppose an aggression with which the law seems unable to cope; and to protect indirectly even the liberties of the land? Time, not only the greatest, but the safest of innovators, must enter into all prudent calculations of change in such institutions as our Church. How short a period has as yet elapsed since our embarrassments, whatever they may be, have begun to be felt and canvassed; and we are dealing with a foundation for ages. We must

be content to wait for the hour and the man; and believe that God, who keeps watch over his Church, will provide for her both, *if* it be good for her, and *when* it is good. For it is hard to imagine that He is just now forsaking her; or to persuade ourselves that with all her imperfections, she is other than a true Church, when we see her labouring to meet the calls upon her far and near so abundantly as she now does? covering the land with churches and schools; giving God speed to the emigrant; remembering the soldier in his barrack; the sailor in his cot; the captive in his prison-house; setting up in the colonies—colonies under the ordering of God scattered over the world, and committed to her—her own Apostolical Form of Faith and Worship; bearing the Cross amongst the heathen to the very ends of the earth; and grappling, in short, with sin and Satan in all quarters? Do we make a boast of this? God forbid! But when the temper of the times, as manifested not by the foes only but by the friends also of the Church, is to rivet the eye upon her peccant parts, and magnify them, it is profitable, it is just, to let her light shine before men, that they may see some of her good works too. Moreover it is due to those who are not prepared to put asunder the civil and ecclesiastical estates, and snap the bond or fetter, be it which it may, under which all this good comes to pass, to make it known that it is not in a spirit of contented Erastianism they are acting or refusing to act, but in a spirit of conscientious caution, which is afraid to ruin this complicated fabric, working in many respects so effectually, and dispersing blessings amongst mankind on so great a scale—a spirit of conscientious caution which desires to pause awhile before it cuts off the entail of such an inheritance from



generations that shall come after them, and for whom they are in trust; which proposes to see the line of duty in this grave matter more clearly determined before they take a step so solemn and so irrevocable. Forgive them this wrong! Sure I am that they will forgive it, who as practical workmen in our Church are entitled to a voice in the measures that affect her; but whose hands are so full, whose hearts so set on the business before them, that they have little leisure for the controversies, the most important controversies, I admit, which agitate more contemplative churchmen. Sure I am that the first thoughts which would cross the men who are facing the difficulties of our colonial Churches—Churches which respond to all the vibrations in our own,—who are encountering perils of waters, inclemencies of climate, journeyings and watchings, cheered however by the consciousness that they are going about doing good, would be, that no precipitate act elsewhere might interfere with their animating toils; and that the same thought would not fail to be uppermost in the minds of many and many a parish priest at home, who, engrossed in the instruction of his ignorant children; in the appeal to his thoughtless congregation to save their souls alive; in the visitation of his sick, cheered to hear the sound of his step on their thresholds; is naturally solicitous that these labours of love, the blessed fruits of which he is daily experiencing both in himself and in his people, may not be disturbed without the most urgent necessity: and may I not add, that if the proposals on foot for the further extension of these great objects; for bringing our long-neglected colonies yet more under the action of the Church, and reaching the heathen through them in the way the most availing; and for lodging within

their grasp more effectually the large districts of England that have escaped from it; if these projects of indisputable benevolence might be permitted, under the favour of God, to draw off some portion of our attention from other objects which have detained it perhaps too exclusively, happy might it be for all; for it might abate the irritation which almost necessarily springs out of pure controversy, and dispose the minds of all parties to pursue the truth in love. It may possibly be well to release our Church from the State; but it cannot be ill to win souls to Christ: nor can any better method be devised meanwhile of really augmenting the Church's strength, and thus enabling it eventually to reassert its rights, if it has lost any, and vindicate its position, if it has been usurped; than thus advancing its usefulness, extending its sphere, exalting its character, swelling its renown.

Possibly the separation which threatens may eventually be brought about by its proper promoters. In that case we must do our best to mitigate a mischief, if mischief it proves, not of our own creation, and regard it as a visitation for the neglects and abuses of by-gone times, if not of our own; for God is often long in bending his bow, and making it ready; but at any rate we shall not then have to charge ourselves with having promoted the confusion which may ensue, by any impatience, intemperance, or inconsideration of ours; but feel ourselves moving under the impulse of an invisible Hand which is working out ends of its own; ends hidden indeed for a little time and mysterious, but which will assuredly manifest themselves at the Great Day, whatever they may be, to the praise and glory of God.

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# SERMON IV.

Preached at Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge, Nov. 23, 1851.

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## AN APOLOGY FOR THE PRAYER-BOOK.

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### I THESS. V. 21.

*Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.*

MANY signs of the times seem to point to the fact that before long we may be called upon to make a stand for the Prayer-book. The Bible and the Bible only, the religion of Protestants, is the significant cry now heard, a sound maxim if rightly understood, but meant, as now adopted, to supersede the maxim of the Reformers, Scripture and the Primitive Church. Societies for Church Reform are instituted, the leading feature of which is a revision of the Prayer-book on what are called, with a meaning of its own, Protestant Principles. Actual Prayer-books of this character are framed and put in circulation. A proposal is started to dissolve the integrity of our own Prayer-book, by making the Articles, and the Articles only, the test of the doctrine of the Church of England. Works calculated to bring early ecclesiastical authority into discredit are republished ; Daillè's book on "The Use of the Fathers" more especially ; one, which however lauded by men who pass for great names, and are so in many departments of literature, but who may be suspected of not having read the series of authors on which Daillè pronounces, and whose estimate of him therefore must be valued accordingly, has been exalted,

as partisan books usually are, much above its worth. A violent and indiscriminate cry of Popery is set up against those who merely maintain the most undeniable doctrines and Rites of the Prayer-book, and who have no more idea of becoming Romanists than of becoming Mahometans; of which the parties who assail them are perfectly aware: All of them, or nearly all of them, features of the times, identical with those which preceded the extinction of the Prayer-book at a former period of our history, insomuch that the tactics of those days seem actually to supply the plan of the campaign for these.

It is well therefore that we should place distinctly before us the position and character of our Prayer-book, that we may know clearly for what we shall have to contend; what there is in it which makes it worthy of defence, and what there is in it which provokes aggression.

The Prayer-book, apart from its character as a Book of National Devotion, which is not the question, is to be regarded as a Code of Primitive Tradition, which helps to the full interpretation of the Bible; expressing what may be there hinted; enlarging what may be there succinct; illustrating what may be there obscure; concentrating what may be there dispersed; organizing what may be there promiscuous.

It derives its authority *primarily*, not from being a document of the Reformation, reverence for it as such a date may beget; nor from expressing the judgment on the matters contained in it of Cranmer and Ridley, much as would be the deference due to the judgment of such men; but from its bearing the date of sub-apostolical antiquity, and from its expressing the sentiments of Cyprian, of Irenæus, of Clemens, of Polycarp, and

the Churches of their day; and so, probably of the Apostles, and of our blessed Lord himself.

For what pains the first Christians took to possess themselves of even the minutest relics of the memory of the Apostles, and of our Lord, we know well. Ignatius speaks of his Epistles being in substance Apostolical Tradition, which he had committed to writing for the greater security; and which accordingly he exhorts those to whom he addresses them to hold fast: Eusebius himself giving sanction to this statement, by his own record and quotation of it\*.

Polycarp had conversed with St John, and with other of his disciples, and took pleasure in repeating their sayings, and those of our Lord too, which they had reported to him.

Irenæus consorted as a boy with Polycarp, and listened to him with the deepest curiosity and interest, whilst he was thus employed†; nor with him only, but with several other Elders of the same, or nearly the same date; with quotations from whom his Work abounds.

Clemens had associated with several teachers who had derived their information in a direct succession from Peter, James, John, and Paul‡.

Papias—and I quote him simply as showing the habit of the times, for we have only a few fragments of his writings; a habit indeed so natural, that we might have presumed it;—Papias tells us that “if any one fell in his way who had been a follower of the Elders,” (*i. e.* the Apostles), “he inquired of him what were the discourses of the Elders, what Andrew, what Peter

\* E. H. III. c. 36.

† Irenæus, *Fragm.* p. 339.

‡ *Stromat.* I. p. 322, Potter's Ed.



had said; what Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of the Lord\*.”

All these however were mere drops of Apostolical Tradition, supplemental to that great stream of it which flowed through all the Apostolical Churches, and of which every member drank freely; Churches where the Apostles had resided, had led the devotions of the people, had prescribed rules and regulations for the proper conducting of those devotions, even to the notice of the dress of the women, and the treatment of the man of the gold ring and goodly apparel; where they had preached, had baptised, had celebrated the Eucharist, had excommunicated, had ordained.

What the Apostles did in one Church on these occasions they did in all the Churches: their proceedings were uniform: they were “ways which they taught every where in every Church;” ways, with which their attendants, the heads of the Churches of the next generation, were made familiar, in order that they might “bring them to remembrance,” as St Paul suggests to Timothy †, and follow them when the Apostles should be absent, or no more; and therefore ways which must have soon become prescriptive, and recognized as of authority in all parts. Indeed Irenæus expressly tells us, that however different were the languages of the Churches throughout the world, the Tradition in them was one and the same; whether in Germany, in Spain, in Gaul, in the East, in Egypt, in Libya, or elsewhere ‡.

It is to the collection of Rites, Ceremonies, Confessions, Prayers, which must thus have accumulated on the attention of the congregations by the proceedings of the Apostles that reference is made in such passages

\* Euseb. E. H. III. c. 39.

† 1 Cor. iv. 17.

‡ I. c. x. § 2.

as the following, “So ordain I in all Churches;” “We have no such custom, neither the Churches of God;” “The rest will I set in order when I come;” “Let all things be done decently and in order;” “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting;” “Hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our Epistle\* :”—and it is to the same which the Primitive Fathers are constantly referring, Irenæus above all, whose argument leads to it, under the names of Apostolical Preaching and Form of Faith; The faith which the Church received from the Apostles and their Disciples; A rich depository derived from them; Ancient Tradition pervading every district; descending in every Church with the succession of its ministers †.

This body of Tradition was the Church’s Prayer-book in ore; whether in the first instance committed to writing or not. There seem to have been reasons, probably connected with the state of persecution under which the Church was labouring, which made the first Christians apprehensive of committing more to writing, that might thus be brought in evidence against them, than was necessary. It is clear there was a difficulty in convicting them. It is upon early record, indeed, that the creeds were not to be written, but learned by heart ‡, and if the creeds, probably the other ingredients of the Church services. But however that may be, the Forms themselves existed; and quotations exist from them still, verifying that fact, in writers as early as Justin, Irenæus, Tertullian, and I think I may say, even to Polycarp and Clemens Romanus.

\* 1 Cor. vii. 17; xi. 16; xi. 34; xiv. 40. Tit. i. 5. 2 Thess. ii. 15.

† Irenæus, I. c. x. §§ 1, 2; III. c. iv. §§ 1, 2; c. iii. §§ 1, 2.

‡ Augustin, Sermo cccxii. Tom. v. p. 938, Benedict. Ed.

Those quotations and those testimonies become more frequent and more copious as we descend in the History of the Church, and as necessity for concealment becomes less. The general Form of the Chief Service, the Eucharistic, which Justin Martyr indicates, the short passages from that service which are found in him, and in a chain of writers immediately after him, are but the forerunners of a more complete disclosure of it in the Catecheses of Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, and in the 19th canon of the Council of Laodicea, both authorities of the fourth century; and even an entire Liturgy presents itself in the Constitutions, perhaps little, if at all, later than this; which, if not used itself, a manifest indication of the character of those Liturgies which were in use at that time.

Thus a Prayer-book now breaks forth fully to the light; and the Western form of it, traced through the Liturgical writers of the middle ages, whose works have come down to us\*, Amalarius, Walafrid Strabo, Durandus, and others, is seen to preserve its substantial identity with that which preceded those ages, and that which followed them, and so under King Edward the Sixth it fell into the hands of our Reformers.

They had the natural reverence for the material on the whole which was to be expected of men familiar with the question; but at the same time they perceived from the evidence of the Bible itself, with which, as they had been taught by Primitive Antiquity, true Tradition was never at variance, that it had become mixed with alloy.

They set themselves therefore patiently and temperately to detect this corruption; and they applied as a test the Primitive Church. This was not only in accord-

\* See *De Catholicæ Ecclesiæ Divinis Officiis*, &c. Rome, 1591.

ance with their own immediate instructions, but with the injunctions of St John, who over and over again bids the Church in its doubts to fall back on “the word which they had heard from the beginning;” “the commandment which they had from the beginning;” and no less in accordance with the example of the early Christians in following these injunctions; of whom Tertullian, in a well-known passage, desires the religious speculators of his day to go for the solution of their doubts to the *Apostolical Churches*, (those being certainly primitive ones,) which happened to be nearest them, and take note of the teaching which obtained there: if they were near Achaia, go to Corinth; if near Macedonia, to Philippi or to the Thessalonians; if near Asia, to Ephesus; if near Italy, to Rome\*. And Irenæus refers the like parties in any disputes upon even small matters still to “the most *Ancient Churches*;” adding, that if the Apostles had left no Scriptures the appeal would have necessarily been to Apostolical Tradition†.

To these ancient Testimonies then our Reformers carried the Prayer-book of their day, and checked off its spurious parts. Accordingly, when it had gone through this discipline, it came from their hands that which it is now, Primitive Tradition restored, the Primitive Rule recovered; deriving, no doubt, a *secondary* authority from the Reformers, in that it bespeaks their deliberate judgment of what Primitive Tradition, what the Primitive Rule was, and their approval of the adoption of it; and considered, not as a book of devotion, for that is not the present question, but as an exponent of Apostolical teaching and practice, it was seen to pronounce for the doctrine of the Trinity, the Atonement, the quickening and purifying office of the Holy Ghost,

\* De Prescript. § 36.

† III. c. 4. § 1.

the exalted virtues of the Two Sacraments, the power of Episcopacy, and many other cardinal questions; and thus became a testimony calculated to set some limits to spontaneous constructions of the naked text of Scripture; and to leave the Churchman, unperplexed by disputations about the Credenda, leisure to turn his attention to the happier province, perhaps, of doing his duty, and walking humbly with his God.

Thus the Prayer-book is a book *sui generis*: we have no other of the same kind, or like it: it is not a mere human composition: it is not an author's, a publisher's, and a bookseller's affair: it is the voice of the ancient Church expressed upon the highest matters; and so, not improbably, that of the Founder of that Church; God's will, not in this instance only, but in almost all instances, having to be sought out of them that love him, through some difficulty, obscurity, uncertainty, and doubt. It would appear to be a part of His trial of us to communicate himself to us reservedly; to put us in a cleft of the rock while He passes by, and allows us only to see His skirts.

But such being the real character of the Prayer-book as developed by its history, have we not need to feel alarm at the spirit in which it is approached with a view to its improvement by parties whose proceedings I alluded to in the beginning of this Sermon; and the apparent unconsciousness of the nature of the document they propose to deal with, which those proceedings betray?

If the present Prayer-book is to be submitted once more to revision, that revision can only be undertaken with safety (considering the semi-sacred character of the book) by those who come to the work in the same spirit in which the Reformers came to theirs; and disposed



and qualified to apply the same test; in the same spirit, namely, a reverential regard for it, as on the whole very probably Apostolical Tradition; with the same test, namely, the Primitive Church.

It was in such a spirit, and with such a test, that Bishop Pearson, *e. g.*, approached the last revision of it.

“Our Church,” says he—I translate from the Latin—“hath framed a Form of Public Prayer, and the supreme authority hath confirmed it. Much in it displeases those who seek after novelty; and, in general, that which is best in it, because most ancient. I confess that I for my part am most moved by those prayers which I know to be old; and I feel myself transported as it were to those most blessed times, when I give utterance to the words that belong to them. When I repeat the Lord’s Prayer I fancy myself in the company of the Apostles; side by side with St Peter and St John—*sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat*—these self-same words did he too pour forth to his God on his bended knees. When we chant after Communion the Eucharistic Hymn, ‘Glory to God in the highest,’ are we not in the very midst of those Primitive brethren, those Believers from the beginning, who composed this and other hymns at the first? What heed can I take of the idle cavils of the men of the new ways about the Responses of the People, when I read in St Augustin, ‘Daily, all the world through, almost with one voice, does the human race reply, We lift up our hearts unto the Lord’; when I hear St Basil declaring ‘the people give utterance to these primitive words, and yet no one ever supposes them to be irreverent’; when I see St Chrysostom defending the very practice which still obtains in the congregation, and saying, ‘At that most mysterious Sacrament does the priest pray for the people, The Lord be

with *you*, and the people for the priest, And with *thy* Spirit\* ' ?”

That was the temper in which Bishop Pearson applied himself to the most delicate and difficult task of revising our Prayer-book; a task, which his own revision and that of his compeers, men of like, one or two perhaps of equal, qualification for the purpose with himself, has only rendered still more delicate and difficult for any future hands. Happy must the age be which furnishes theologians able to improve upon a work which a Cranmer and a Ridley have constructed, and a Pearson and a Sanderson reviewed, retouched, and reaffirmed! Happy the country of which the ecclesiastical scholarship is so ripe, and at the same time so widely diffused, that not only its divines, but its laymen, its politicians, its mechanics themselves, are competent to it! But when it is proposed, as it now is, to advance upon the Prayer-book with a foregone determination to render it more true to Protestant principles, we can scarcely flatter ourselves that such an age and such a country is our own; and are rather led to see in such a proceeding, a simple attempt to force the Prayer-book into accordance with those opinions which the parties themselves who are at the bottom of the movement happen to hold for the time being; and substitute the judgment of certain Protestants of the day on the meaning of Scripture, for that of Justin, Irenæus, Clemens, Cyprian; and the decision of a Reform Society for that of the Primitive Church.

May it not be doubted whether the authors of this attempt, or at any rate many of those who join in it, against the Prayer-book as it stands, have sufficiently considered where the principle of “No Tradition” may

\* Minor Theolog. Works, II. p. 13.

eventually lead them? And whether they may not be buying the suppression of certain doctrines which they seek to overthrow at a dearer price than they suppose?

They are of the large class, I take for granted, who would approve of such sentiments as the following:—

“I do not allow any man now living to be in any respect my master in the matters which I have handled in that reply of mine; but I have had for my Teacher God only and the Holy Scriptures. Moreover in the whole science itself of Divinity, so far at least as I can lay claim to it, it has fallen to my lot to have had no master whatever, save only my uncle Lælius, now long since dead, or rather some few of his writings, and many of his notes.”

I repeat, this statement would meet the approbation of a great part of our Prayer-book Reformers. The author of it had taken for his guide in Theology God only and the Holy Scriptures, occasionally consulting, as it would be now said, an eminent Protestant\*: yet whose language is this? It is Socinus' own, literally translated from a passage in a Latin letter of his, quoted by Dr Waterland†; and whoever will be at the pains to examine the Racovian Catechism will see that he is as good as his word in dealing with the science of Divinity, and that in almost every instance of cardinal Doctrine he is directly opposed to Primitive Tradition, and could not have arrived at his conclusions had he allowed himself to be influenced by it. Yet, unsatisfactory as I am persuaded these conclusions would be to a very large number of our Prayer-book Reformers, the

\* The pedigree of the word *Protestant* as now used is carefully and curiously investigated by Mr Scudamore, in his ‘Letters to a Seceder from the Church of England to the Communion of Rome,’ Appendix B. 1851.

† Waterland's Works, v. p. 283. Oxf. Ed.

Holy Scripture you see alone was Socinus' rule, as it is theirs.

So again, they adopt with manifest satisfaction the same sentiment in the terser form given to it by Chillingworth to which I have already alluded, "The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants;" but members of our Church at least should bear in mind, that this was the maxim of one who at the time he uttered it could not sign the Articles\*; of one who did not understand by the "Religion of Protestants," as he himself candidly tells us on this very occasion, "the doctrine of Luther, or Calvin, or Melancthon; nor the Confession of Augusta, or Geneva, nor the Catechism of Heidelberg, nor the *Articles of the Church of England*, no, nor the harmony of Protestant confessions; but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater harmony, as a perfect rule of their faith and actions; that is, the Bible†;" of one who, according to the testimony of his personal friend Lord Clarendon, "had spent all his younger time in disputation....and had thus contracted such an irresolution and habit of doubting, that by degrees he grew confident of nothing, and a sceptic at least in the greatest mysteries of faith ‡;" of one who then betook himself, according to the same authority, too easily to the Church of Rome, and afterwards with as much haste withdrew from it; who then became a Protestant, in the sense of the word we have seen, and wrote his *Religion of Protestants*, where the sentiment so much bruited occurs; the work, no doubt, of a most subtle controversialist; but one which peoples the mind of the reader with a swarm

\* Chillingworth's Works, Oxf. Ed. i. p. 34. Preface to the Author of *Charity Maintained*, § 39.

† Religion of Protestants, II. p. 410. Pt. II. c. vi. § 56.

‡ Clarendon's Life, Vol. I. pp. 62, 63.

of difficulties on the subject of religion, which it required parts as acute as his own to discover, and whilst it triumphs over the Romanist has a strong tendency to disturb and perplex the Christian; who whilst employed upon this Book, if his biographer dates his letter right, in which the passage appears, affirms that one who shall examine the evidence on the Arian question, "shall not choose but confess, or at least be very inclinable to believe, that the doctrine of Arius is either a truth, or at least no damnable heresy\*;" who shortly afterwards accepted preferment, and signed the Articles; and so ended his short but most unstable course, never true to the same sentiments for more than two or three years together, and leaving behind him a name, distinguished indeed, but involved in mystery.

Would it be to be desired, and would even any considerable number of our Prayer-book Reformers themselves desire it, that a *nation* should adopt the same law of liberty as Chillingworth, with the same results?

It moves one's concern to see one man—and such a man—thus troubled, undertaking to construct for himself unaided, one platform of faith after another on which to rest, and still demolishing it to make way for its successor, settling however upon the Church of England after all; as it moves one's wonder, that the substantial virtues of his character should have been proof against such a vacillation of creed. But the spectacle of a whole community passing through such a process would be awful indeed; and such as the majority of the Reformers of our Prayer-book, I doubt not, would be shocked to contemplate.

But is it not the natural consummation to which their principle of weakening or repudiating Primitive

\* Life, prefixed to his Works, p. xxiii.



Tradition leads? The Canon, the substance, the meaning of Scripture on vital points, are all most deeply concerned in it. Shake primitive Tradition, and you shake them all.

The early Heretics perpetually advance arguments in defence of their speculations from pretended Scriptures. This drives the Fathers to affirm the genuine. The Heretics bring forward their Gospels. The Fathers deny that they are of authority; none being of authority but Four. This line of argument involves the production of the Four, which are thus manifestly seen to be our own.

The Heretics defend themselves by St Paul. The Fathers protest that it is impossible St Paul could speak as they make him, for that it would contradict all his Epistles, read in the Churches, carefully preserved, recognized, and notorious. This line of argument involves the production of those Epistles, and enables us to identify them with our own.

The Heretics take upon themselves to accommodate Scripture to their own taste, picking and choosing out of it, as might answer their purpose. They would accept, for instance, a part of St Luke's Gospel, and a part reject. The Fathers tell them that they must be content to use it or refuse it: that in the latter case they must be prepared to relinquish such incidents in it as were peculiar to that Gospel, (many of which it did not suit them to forego); and accordingly they proceed to give a catalogue of such incidents as are related by St Luke exclusively. But this argument involves testimony of the Early Church not merely to the substance of St Luke's Gospel, but indirectly to that of the other three Gospels with which it is compared; and furnishes us with the means of ascertaining whether our own are the same.

The Heretics maintain that Jesus exercised his ministry but one year after his Baptism. The Fathers refute them by investigating the number of Passovers which Jesus attended in Jerusalem, according to the Gospel of St John; stating minutely the circumstances which preceded, accompanied, and followed each of those journeys. The investigation gives ample scope for testing our present Gospel of St John by that of the Early Church, and for concluding that the two are perfectly identical.

The Heretics make a distinction between the God of the Old Testament, and the God of the New; the one is Just, the other Good. The Fathers set themselves to refute this notion, by shewing how close is the relation between the two Revelations; and how full the Old Testament is of signs and prophecies of the Saviour of the New. But this argument involves testimony to the Evangelical sense in which the Early Church understood a multitude of the Old Testament texts.

The Heretics deny that Jesus Christ took flesh, affirming that he was a Phantom. The Fathers resent this supposition, and give their reasons for so doing: but those reasons involve a disclosure of the sentiments of the Early Church on the subject of the Incarnation, and of the meaning of the mysterious texts connected with it.

The Heretics denounce the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and account him a man born after the ordinary manner of men. The Fathers express their dismay at such doctrine; point to the history of St John and Cerinthus in the bath; array against them a phalanx of passages in Scripture which bespeak (they affirm) his Godhead; and, what is more, consider every difficulty

which can be pleaded against the Gospel, based on the doctrine of Christ's divinity, to be a legitimate difficulty; one which the unbeliever had a right to urge, and one which it behoved the Christian advocate to remove; Celsus constantly taking up this weapon, and Origen always treating it as a perfectly fair one. But in this discussion the sense in which the Early Church understood the nature of the Son, and most of the Scriptures which bear upon the Godhead of the Son, clearly transpires.

The Heretics contend that it was Christ, and not the Holy Ghost, which descended upon Jesus at his Baptism. The Fathers reprobate the doctrine, and in so doing enlarge upon the blank which would be left in the scheme of Revelation if the functions of the Holy Ghost were extinguished, as they would be by thus superseding the agent. But this argument lays open the judgment of the Early Church on the inspiring, illuminating, purifying office of the Third Person of the Trinity, and the meaning it assigned to the class of texts which have the Holy Spirit for their subject.

Nay, the very form which these Heresies assumed, is often enough in itself to offer the clearest intimation of many of the Church's leading doctrines; and when Simon Magus, for instance, taught, as he is reported to have done, that it was no other than himself who appeared in Judæa as the Son; in Samaria as the Father; and amongst other nations as the Holy Ghost\*, he furnishes, unwittingly, a very strong presumptive argument that the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity was preached in some sense or other.

The Heretics set up a ministry of their own, and

\* Irenæus, I. c. 23, § 1. See Wilson's "Illustration of the Method of explaining the New Testament," c. xv.

rites and ceremonies of their own; counterfeits in almost all instances of the corresponding features of the Church. The Fathers deny the validity of that ministry and those rites, and demonstrate the nature of their defect; but this argument involves the production of the Primitive Church's notions of the authority of the Christian Priesthood; the foundation on which it rests; the origin from which it springs; the line in which it descends; the virtues with which it is adorned;—developes, in short, the whole structure of the Early Church.

I might in this manner go through almost every cardinal point in Theology, and shew the singular way in which Primitive Tradition was providentially led to pronounce upon them all. For it might well seem—as indeed Scripture appears in one place to imply—that God had allowed heresies to multiply as they did, and to take the various fantastic forms they did in the early times, expressly to make manifest, and put on permanent record, the doctrines of the Primitive Church. For they touch it on all sides; the extravagance of the heresy not at all disqualifying it, but rather the contrary, for the office of eliciting from the Church its judgment on matters eventually the most important. Nothing, certainly, can be more idle than a vast number of the theories of the early heretics; our surprise only is that grave and learned men should have thought it worth their while to expose them so carefully and so patiently as they did. But never were pains better bestowed; and never did results more remarkably surpass any expectation which could have been formed of them by the agents themselves at the time. They were building without knowing it for futurity. Most of the errors

against which they were directing their strength were destined soon to pass away and perish; and would, under any circumstances, it should seem, whether opposed or not, have died a natural death of mere absurdity. But God ordered it otherwise, and made them the means, before they expired, of raising up durable witnesses to the Church, its constitution, its doctrines, its discipline, of inestimable value.

So rich a deposit is the teaching of the Early Church which has been thus preserved to us; and so precious a magazine of knowledge illustrative of the Scripture are they prepared to throw away who disown Primitive Tradition.

Now the Prayer-book is the pith of these stores. It embraces in itself, short and succinct as it is, the very marrow of them. Not that it is a formal abridgment or abstract of them; but that it is rather a body of Tradition concurrent with them, true to them, interlaced with them, in harmony with them: the doctrines and discipline of the Early Church reflected in its early devotions. The Athanasian Creed, *e. g.*, which is a portion of it, stands upon its own right, but yet almost every clause of it finds its parallel in the writings of St Augustin, and many clauses of it in writings even anterior to him.

It is not then to any impracticable principle that our Church appeals when she refers her members to Primitive Tradition. She does not bid them range for themselves over the wide field of Patristical Theology—however advantageous it may be to do so for those who have leisure for the work—but she bids them abide by the Prayer-book; a small volume; a volume within reach of all; within the comprehension of all; with



which she furnishes all. And it is with a desire to clench that injunction that I have ventured to address you to-day, and urge you to stand by this feature of the Reformation, and not allow yourselves to be robbed of a pearl of great price, perhaps the most precious that the Reformation has bequeathed to us, under any pretence, and be persuaded to take a mock one instead of it, that might turn out even worse than a Roman.

I cannot, however, consent to close this Sermon without begging you now to dismiss from your minds the Prayer-book as a standard of Faith and Practice; a standard which has hitherto kept the Church constantly true to itself, counteracting from time to time its obliquity, whichever way it might bear; and regard it for a moment as a hand-book of Public Devotion. What a calamity would it be if by any rude derangement of it in the one character we should pave the way for losing it in the other! How could we replace it! Where could we find thoughts that breathe and words that burn like its own! How reasonable is it, and yet how impassioned! How catholic, and yet how true to the wants of every man's own heart! How charmingly are its several parts disposed and combined! How do they relieve one another and sustain one another! So that share in it as often as we will, we never weary of it! And let accident or necessity suspend our participation in it for a season, and with what eagerness do we revert to it when the time comes! How hearty are its accents of self-abasement! How touching its cries for mercy! How earnest its petitions! How high and animating its notes of Thanksgiving and Praise! How elastic is it! How affecting in its simplicity when it cheers our humble village-church! How sublime in its majesty when it puts

forth the fulness of its strength in our cathedrals! How suited to all ranks and conditions of men! How grateful to the scholar! How acceptable to the peasant! What multitudes of hearts has it lifted up to God! What multitudes of souls has it led to Paradise! *Esto perpetuum!*

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# SERMON V.

Preached at Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge, Thursday, March 8, 1849;  
being the Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Society for Promoting  
Christian Knowledge.

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## MEANS AND METHOD OF NATIONAL REFORM.

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### ACTS V. 42.

*And daily in the Temple, and in every house, they ceased  
not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*

SUCH was the conduct of the Apostles: and after their example did the Society whose hundred and fiftieth anniversary we are to-day assembled to commemorate, shape its purposes. It promised to be, and it has eminently proved itself to be what it promised, a Society for promoting *Christian* knowledge. It arose out of the wants of the times when its foundations were laid; wants probably engendered, certainly aggravated, by the series of convulsions which the kingdom had been passing through; and thus serving to shew the disastrous effects which often continue to flow from national commotions long after the struggle is past, however moderated that struggle may have been, and however justifiable it may have been reputed.

It is impossible to look back on the ecclesiastical literature of the latter end of the seventeenth and the beginning and even middle of the last century without being struck with the Laodicean spirit of the age; deism at least, I will not say dominant, but most prevailing; much of the theology of the day, directed

against it; having no higher aim than to dispose men to believe that revelation might be true; Chubb, Morgan, Collins, Tindal, having succeeded Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Hobbes, and Toland, of a former generation; and accordingly the field of controversy occupied, most successfully occupied, no doubt, by defenders of the mere outworks of the faith; by Bentley's most powerful exposure of 'The Folly and Unreasonableness of Atheism;' by his 'Phileleutherus Lipsiensis;' by the 'Analogy' of Bishop Butler, and other writings of the same author and the same school; by the 'Divine Legation' of Bishop Warburton—a less safe vindication of the truth indeed, but still an elaborate effort against the free-thinkers, calculated, like the others I have named, to mark the character of the age; by a large portion of the admirable writings of Dr Waterland; by the 'Short Method with the Deists' of Mr Leslie; by the 'Credibility of the Gospel History' of Lardner—for the dissenter, too, buckled on his armour in the cause of Christianity; by the 'Observations on the Conversion of St Paul' of Lord Littleton; and by the 'Internal Evidence of Christianity' of Soame Jenyns; for even laymen of the better sort could not be content merely to vex their souls and hold their peace.

I. It was at such a period as this, that a few, a very few, wise and good men had the heart to establish "The Society for promoting *Christian Knowledge*." There was no particular lack of other knowledge in the country at the time: on the contrary, it was an epoch distinguished for great philosophers, some of the most remarkable on record; great scholars, some of the deepest and most universal ever born amongst us; great poets, some of the most renowned we can boast; great historians, some who have never been surpassed or super-

seded since; but still our Lord might have addressed it, as he addressed the young man in the Gospel, "One thing thou lackest—follow me." It was to this want that the Founders of this Society applied themselves; for they felt that *secular* knowledge, be it what it may, cannot be a substitute for *religious*, in regulating the heart and actions either of men or nations. They felt, as all believing persons must feel, (would that our rulers in casting their schemes of education would bear this in mind!) that such a notion is altogether faulty in principle; is itself of infidel origin; leaving out of account, as it does, the great feature of revelation, that *we are fallen*—fallen, not through want of knowledge, nay rather through the lust of it; fallen—so that whereas God had once looked on us with calm complacency, and beheld all that he had made, man with the rest, to "be very good;" the day soon came when he had to look on it again, and declare, that it repented him that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart. They felt that no extension of science, no amount of literature, could reconstruct this ruin; that it was not the remedy appropriate to the evil; that it was wholly beside the mark; that the image of God was not to be restored by mechanical schools, nor the Spirit of God, when it refuses to strive with man any longer, to be won back by mere cultivation of the mental powers. They felt that the true restorative was that which the Bible prescribes, at the instant that it relates the catastrophe; and that it was the "seed of the woman," and nothing else, which was the weapon wherewith to bruise the serpent's head. They had not forgot that the Greek, subtle as he was in apprehension, refined, and delicate, and fastidious in taste, in short, far more intellectual, if that be all, than we can ever hope to render the ordinary inhabitants of



our manufacturing towns, was little above a mere animal in his appetites or the controul of them ; witness the scenes of his drama, and the relics of his art : that St Paul, when on Mars' hill, surrounded by the choicest specimens of architecture and sculpture in the world, aware of the magazines of literature about him, not insensible to the mental curiosity of his audience, alive as they were to every new thing, considered the place, yes Athens itself, to be in darkness ; the times to be "times of ignorance," at which, however man might pride himself on them, God had to wink : that his estimate of Rome was the same ; of Rome, little past her Augustan age ; with whose language he was, no doubt, familiar, for he spake in tongues more than all his fellows ; and in the miraculous outpouring of those tongues at Pentecost, one was that of the strangers of Rome ; not to say that we find him holding free converse with the centurion Julius, and with the soldiers in the ship, and teaching all that came to his house at Rome ; speaking Latin therefore, as he did, and apprised as he must have been of the character at least of the literature of Rome, the authors of the rarest part of it but just passed away, what a picture does he draw, when addressing *Romans*, of the *moral* condition of the people !—for the features of the sketch must have been meant to apply to the Romans amongst others, in order that the argument should come home to them ; representing these fellow-citizens of Cicero and Virgil—themselves, as it has been said, "but the rubbish of an Adam"—whose fame and fortune filled the world, as actually, after all, "without understanding."

Again, the Founders of this Society, this Society for promoting *Christian* Knowledge, felt that no other knowledge, no *secular* knowledge of any kind, or of any

amount, could be a substitute for religious, in enforcing the duties of *imperfect* obligation, as they are called, though of as true obligation as any others, if rightly considered; duties, on the faithful discharge of which the comfort and happiness of life depend almost altogether; for they are those that constitute its staple occupation. They felt, that if it is the duty of parents to love and cherish and guide their children, it is not an acquaintance with chemistry that will make them do it: that if it is the duty of servants to be obedient and true to their masters, it is not a skill in arithmetic that will bring it about: that if it is the duty of citizens to exercise the franchise with integrity, it is not a knowledge of mechanics, however ingeniously applied to the construction of the ballot-box, that will secure it: not that chemistry, and arithmetic, and mechanics, are unimportant objects in themselves, but that they are utterly misplaced when used as substitutes for religion. And though they would have confessed that there may be certain departments of knowledge where the religious and the secular conspire to dictate the same line of duty; the secular supplying a motive supplemental, if you will, to the religious, and God confirming the precepts of His revealed word by the movements of the system in which He has placed us; yet even here they felt the religious principle to be far more effective than the secular; far more worthy of being made the chief element of education. They knew, *e. g.*, that though it may be shewn on principles of political economy, that the institution of property is for the benefit of all, poor as well as rich, and that a license to violate it would be unreasonable and inconvenient; yet that the rights of property would be better secured by a strong sense, that it was God's pleasure there should be poor, that the poor should

never cease from the land; relieved however by the equally strong sense, that the poor were His peculiar care; and that it is His commandment which says, Thou shalt not steal. They knew that though it might be proved in a similar manner that the institution of marriage is productive of greater happiness to mankind than promiscuous concubinage; yet that chastity was far more safe when under the keeping of God's sanction, "Marriage is honourable among all men," and, "fornicators and adulterers He will judge." They knew that though it might be demonstrated on rational grounds, that order and submission to government contribute to the welfare of every member of the commonwealth; yet that the end is far more effectually attained by a hearty acknowledgement of the text, "let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for the powers that be are ordained of God:" any infraction of the rule, in the one case, being simply foolish; in the other, wrong; in the one case, an error; in the other, a sin.

Once more—The Founders of this Society felt that in promoting *Christian* knowledge, they were promoting the most *enlarged* knowledge of all; knowledge of the greatest dignity of all; for it was knowledge that directed the thoughts to *eternity*, instead of limiting them to *time*; which had an enduring world for its primary object, rather than a world that should pass away. They felt that the education which chiefly directs the efforts and energies of the mind of man to the creation or multiplication of the conveniences, the luxuries, the wealth, the resources of life, was narrow, cramped, and defective. They felt that the names we regard with *profound* reverence, are names associated in our minds with the Deity; with sublime efforts on their parts to develop His glory, and to ascertain and ratify His will;

that others may be wits, but these, we think, and these only, are wise. They felt again, that life is full of evils, which the expedients of the day, however ingenious, will not reach; that poverty, and pain, and blighted hopes, and broken hearts, and all the wear and tear of our feverish being, can find no satisfactory refuge in mere acquirements; that our course runs through catastrophes like these, the more surely the further we advance in it; and therefore that no process of instruction can be a complete one, or even approach to completeness, which (I will not say) leaves provision for these contingencies out of its reckoning, but which does not assign to such provision a very foremost place; that the skill of the physician, however well tutored, is no substitute for the patient attention of a Christian friend; that the pillow, however artistically made, furnishes no repose like that of a quiet conscience; that the valley of the shadow of death is lighted up by no knowledge so cheering, as by that of a merciful Saviour and an immortal crown. For, contemplate the last end of men of the most capacious intellect, of the vastest attainments, and see how all "knowledge," save of one kind, loses its hold on them, and vanishes away, even before the period when the Apostle describes it as destined so to do, even before the breath has departed. How affecting, and how sobering, is the closing scene of one of the master-spirits of literature of our own time! He would have his friend read to him: "What shall be the book?" "Need you ask, there is but one!" And as all have to go through these trials, all have need to be put in possession of the sovereign charm against them. Meanwhile they felt that this *Christian* knowledge does not disqualify for the active pursuits of life, or make it necessary that we should go out of the world in order to



realize it: on the contrary, that it finds a field for itself in the superintendence of those pursuits; in prescribing and regulating them; in reducing them to their proper rank and proper proportions; and that by abating the passions that blind, and the prejudices that warp, and the frailties that enfeeble, it paves the way to successful enterprise, where it is harmless, even in the system that now is.

II. But then comes the further consideration, in what form is this *Christian* knowledge to be communicated?

Now the Founders of this Society thought good to proceed on the principle which God himself encouraged by the mouth of Jeremiah the Prophet, when a similar revival of religion was required in Israel, "stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the *old paths*, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." They felt that the maxim which regulated the Reformation—the Reformation, now so frequently misrepresented in its leading characteristics—was the sound one; and that in dispersing Christian knowledge it would be safe to take that to be such, which was agreeable to *Scripture* and the *Primitive Church*. Accordingly they determined to send out the *Bible* and the *Prayer-book* together; to circulate *Scripture* and the *Church's* recorded *sense* of *Scripture*. They felt that what have been talked of as the general principles of Christianity, as those principles which every reader of *Scripture* may deduce for himself from the *Bible* by the simple exercise of his own private judgment, are fluctuating and unfixed; that one reader of the *Bible* can find in it no doctrine of original sin; another, no atonement; a third, no Godhead in the Saviour; a fourth, no Person in the Holy Ghost; a fifth, no Trinity of any kind; a sixth, no Sacraments; a seventh, no Episcopal go-



vernment; an eighth, no Clergy; and they naturally asked themselves, what kind of Christianity is that which is the residuum of Scripture, when the doctrine of original sin, of the atonement, of the Godhead of the Saviour, of the Personality of the Holy Ghost, of the Trinity, of Sacraments, and of a Priesthood, have been eliminated. They thought a basis which admitted of all these, and many more such differences of opinion, was too wide, for their purpose at least; that a margin so considerable could be occupied eventually by nothing but a crop of sceptical controversies; and that a theory of such latitude, when reduced to practice, (and they were practical men,) could only embarrass all useful action; and still leave, for instance, our manufacturing and mining districts, where the population was of recent growth and beyond the reach of existing institutions, unprovided with religious instruction altogether, because the form of it could not be determined upon—in a condition to invite meanwhile the operations of rebellious and godless agitators, as naturally as the barley-field did Samson's foxes and fire-brands;—and our colonies, swarming with forlorn and ignorant outcasts from their native shores, without Church or Sacrament, because we were disputing at home as to what Churches and Sacraments were. They felt that they should give greater force to their teaching by making it more *restrictive*, and so knowing their own minds about what it should be; that they should impart greater union, and by consequence greater strength to their body, by requiring it to be more closely concordant; that it was better, some should even bitterly dissent, than that none should cordially agree; and above all, they were under the stedfast conviction, that the teaching they cleaved to was the truth; or at least, that no other was secured by such

guarantees for its truth; and accordingly they refused to put asunder what they believed God had put together, *Scripture* and the *Church*.

I think, for my own part, we are deeply indebted to them, as well for other advantages, to which I shall presently advert, as for this stand; and that, as the times have since turned out, there is no telling how far the religion of this country might have drifted from its moorings, had not this Society been formed; or being formed, had it consisted of less stable material; of members of less constancy, and less discretion. For many years, until quite recently, no texts of Scripture have been so popular among us as those which allowed, or were supposed to allow, a latitudinarian interpretation; no spirit regarded as congenial with the Gospel, but that of unreserved concession. They, however, had read Scripture, and sub-apostolical antiquity, in another, and it may be suspected perhaps, in a stricter sense; had weighed it in a juster balance. They found in Scripture indeed the text, that "we are to live peaceably with all men," but coupled with the qualification, "as much as in us lies;" and they argued that such reservation implies limits to this latitude; that we may buy even peace too dearly; may be called upon to surrender too much even for that. They found in Scripture that it is "woe to that man of whom all men speak well," because, as they concluded, such a man would not be prepared to make sacrifices to principle; would have no such zeal for the right, as would induce him to investigate where it lay, at the cost, it might be, of pains and patience; or as would inspire him, when he had discovered it, to risk personal convenience and popularity in its defence; finding as he would find, a double advantage in sailing with the stream—at once an easy

course, and a harvest of golden opinions. They perceived that the Apostle, who above all the Apostles, expounds the Gospel as a scheme of boundless love, tells us “not to receive the man into our house, or bid him God speed, who did not bring with him the doctrine of Christ;” and they had read elsewhere that he rushed out of the bath when he found Cerinthus in possession of it, exclaiming, lest the roof fall on me\*. They knew that another Apostle, who teaches us to “follow peace with all men,” nevertheless teaches us too, “to mark those which cause dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and to avoid them,” and scruples not to affirm, that there are those “whose mouth must be stopped;” and they were aware that the highest authority of all represents his Gospel, as however in one aspect of it, sending peace on earth, still, as in another, sending a sword—a sword, as being a power which was to cut asunder the strongest ties, when the alternative of sparing them was a compromise of the truth. They remembered that the characteristic of the primitive Christians, as estimated by the earliest witnesses, was not pliant accommodation, but “inflexible obstinaey,” *inflexibilis obstinatio*†: that this temperament did not display itself simply, as in the case alluded to, in resistance to mere *heathen* provocation, but in the shape it gave to the rules and ordinances of the sub-apostolical Church; rules and ordinances evidently concerted under a resolute determination “to hold fast,” as was enjoined, “the form of sound words which they had heard of the Apostles”—“to keep the good thing which was committed to them,” at whatever cost. Hence the pains with which the Church of that period prepared her catechumens; the confessions of faith to

\* Irenæus, III. 3. § 4.

† Plin. *Epist.* x. 97.

which she repeatedly submitted them before she received them to baptism. Hence the penances she inflicted on her members after a lapse; the jealousy with which she guarded their return to her, and conceded them absolution. Hence the severity with which she conducted her arguments against heretics; exposing the nature of their delinquency; denouncing their opinions; shunning their society. Hence the exclusive claims she set up for her own apostolical origin, and the unbroken succession of her priesthood. Hence, in a word, a multitude of prescriptions and precautions, which left on record as they are in the earliest of the Fathers, *startle* us, as we contrast them with the lax sentiments upon similar subjects of our own times, and make us feel how far we are from being able to bear sound doctrine, if the doctrine of the sub-apostolical Church was such. The founders of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, therefore, felt that they were at least acting in the *spirit* of the primitive teachers, however they might fall short of its *intensity*, when they circulated that knowledge according to a specific and dogmatical form, when they spoke the sense of Scripture on cardinal points—for a great number of subordinate ones were still left open—through the written formularies of the Church, “a witness and keeper” of Scripture. They considered that there probably never was a time when a Prayer-Book had not run side by side with the Bible; that the very first intimation we have of the method in which the Christian worship was conducted, combines the reading of Scripture, the Old and New Testament, with the use of Common Prayer\*; that the testimony of every succeeding century is still to the same effect: that the Creeds, a most essential portion of

\* Justin. Mart. 1 *Apol.* § 67.



this Prayer-book, as defining the doctrines of Scripture, are in their substance, and in the case of the Apostles' Creed, in the very form, probably coeval with the completion of the Canon of Scripture itself, with the Bible itself as a volume; for that even in the fourth century, when we first meet with an exposition of it, and have to gather its component parts out of that exposition, (so casual is the manner in which it is presented to us,) even then, the origin of it was lost in a still higher antiquity; and the tradition even then current, that the Apostles themselves had framed it before their dispersion\*: that the Nicene Creed, or Constantinopolitan rather, is not to be regarded as the creation of those Councils, but the previous teaching of the Church expressed and authorised at those Councils: that the Athanasian Creed itself, whenever reduced to its present shape, (and that, probably as early as the fifth century), did not then *begin* to have an existence, but was made up of materials, and even of expressions, of far more ancient date; nearly every clause of it having been actually traced to Augustine, and a very large portion of it admitting of being traced to Fathers even prior to him, whose sentiments on the metaphysical nature of the Godhead happened to have been drawn out by heresies of their day. They were not ignorant that the allusions to this primitive Prayer-book in the earliest Fathers of all, the recital of its chief features in Fathers next to the earliest, and in Councils, identify in the main that Liturgy, with the several primitive Liturgies, which have descended to us, more or less pure; there being a certain substantial similarity in them all: that

\* Rufinus, *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum*, given at the end of Cyprian. Benedict. Ed. Augustin. Sermo ccxii. in *Traditione Symboli*, Tom. v. p. 938. Benedict. Ed.



these again merged themselves in the medieval Liturgies; these latter in the uses of Salisbury, York, and the rest; and these again in our present book of Common Prayer: the progress of our ritual through this long series of years, in a very great degree, capable of being tracked by documentary evidence; and one feature, as I have said, found to be prominent throughout it, namely, a conjunction of Scripture with the formularies of common prayer; the *divine* and *sacred* writings, as distinct one from the other, which Eusebius\* tells us he saw burned in the persecution of Diocletian; the *many* books which, Bede informs us, Gregory sent to Augustine†, probably meant to indicate both: and that as our Collects, multitudes of them, our Prayers, many of them, our Offices, especially that for the Holy Communion, both in plan, and to a great extent in detail, are primitive; so our Epistles and Gospels, united with them, are the very same (with exceptions scarcely worth naming) as those standing to this day in the 'Use of Salisbury,' drawn up immediately after the Conquest; which, again, can be proved to be the very same as those used in the Anglo-Saxon Church prior to the Conquest; which, again, can be all but proved to have been those used by Augustine, and brought into this country by him with his Gregorian Sacramentary—even Gregory himself, as we positively know, not the author of the Formulary which goes by his name, but the reviser of one which he found in possession of the Church, and which must therefore have mounted to an age all but apostolical‡. The founders then of this Society felt, as the Reformers of our Church had felt before them, that a continuous stream, not of oral, but of written tradition, reaching from the most

\* *E. H.* VIII. c. 2. τὰς ἐνθρόνου καὶ ἱερὰς γραφὰς.

† Bede, *E. H.* I. c. 29. codices plurimos. ‡ *E. H.* II. c. 1, p. 107.

remote time, like this, was not to be lightly regarded; that it was indeed to be thoroughly filtered; and this our Reformers had done for it, though not having occasion to reject an item of the most important part of all, the Creeds; but that to put it violently aside, and systematically discourage all application of it to Scripture, and connexion of it with Scripture, was wilfully to repudiate a great help to the understanding of Scripture, which the providence of God has preserved to us; and that it should seem a perverse exercise of the right of private judgment on the meaning of Scripture, to renounce a very important ingredient in the material for forming such a judgment; and to prefer coming to a conclusion on the most solemn of all questions without having patience to listen to the whole evidence.

Nor is this all. The founders of this Society felt that by circulating the Prayer-book in close connexion with the Bible, they were supplying in the most effectual, and at the same time least invidious, way, a common standard of orthodoxy (in the best and most legitimate sense of that much-abused word) to the whole country; that such regulation would have the effect upon the *faith* of the people, which the dispersion of the standard measures of capacity and weight has on their *dealing*—keep it correct, even where no explicit appeal might be made to it: that as the Government, by withdrawing these mechanical standards, would soon be found to have rendered all trading transactions precarious and of doubtful integrity; so, were the Church to withdraw her Prayer-book, and in proportion as she should withdraw it, or not give it free course, would the Creed of the people become faulty and unsound; heresies, hitherto kept in check by habitual deference to an authority justly respected, would begin to take life; ignorance,

hitherto abashed by the presence of superior knowledge, would wax bold and presumptuous; indifference, hitherto stimulated by the use of forms of prayer and praise full of emotion, would lapse into carnal apathy; the morality of the country less strict, the temper less devotional; insomuch that dissenters themselves, such as had religion really at heart, who had desired to reduce the Prayer-book all their lives, having now got their will, would learn, to their surprise, how much they owed to it, without being aware of the obligation; and that if they had been able to preserve permanently among their own congregations doctrines which they considered vital, and which truly were so, it was very principally because they had been living in the same land with a Church which had a Prayer-book; the shadow of which at least reached even unto them, and would not suffer such doctrines to expire, be they where they would: for that all experience shews, that religious communities, unprovided with formularies, or only provided with such as are of their own spontaneous devising, and accordingly carry with them no ancient tradition to give them force, when left to themselves wander away into all extremes and all extravagancies; not unfrequently losing by degrees, and perhaps unconsciously, every feature of the faith once delivered to the Saints; the fanatics of one generation proving the deists of another; there being no certainty about the course and character of the many inventions which the heart of man, when unrestrained by ordinances, may seek out for itself, except this, that the natural depravity of it will have its way, and sink them from bad to worse.

III. On these principles then; on the *Bible* and *Prayer-Book*; on *Scripture* and the *Primitive Church*; the *principles of the Reformation*; has the Society for

promoting Christian Knowledge taken its stand. It only remains, in conclusion, to say a word upon the manner in which it has applied these principles; to test its theory by its practice; and my task, though task I will not call it, of recommending it to your sympathies and assistance is done.

It set itself to establish Schools, at a period when not only was there scarcely one of the kind to be found in our parishes, but strange to say, when there was even a feeling unfriendly to them; and now we have upwards of twenty-one thousand; an occupation of the field of national education so decisive, as to have secured to the Church a position from which it would not be easy to dislodge her, even if there existed the wish; fixed the union of religious with secular teaching by bonds likely to be lasting; and saved us from that utilitarian form of it, the defects of which I endeavoured to expose in the early part of this Sermon; but which the taste of the times, had the ground been clear and unoccupied, might have been disposed to regard with favour and adopt. I think a deep debt of gratitude is due to the Society if its influence has spared us this consummation.

It set itself to spread the Gospel through our Colonies and distant possessions; and though I will not say it found them brick, and has made them marble—for alas! there is still but too much to be done in that quarter—yet finding them destitute of pastors, sheep utterly without shepherds, it now can count two and twenty Bishops actively at work in them, at the head of their respective Clergy; toiling to raise funds on the spot, and from the ends of the earth, to give effect to their schemes; rallying around them self-devoted men, friends and followers, a band of brothers, to bear along

with them the Cross ; creating Colleges, the germ and growth of which remind one of the infant fortunes of our own ; may they arrive at the same maturity ! organizing Christian congregations under a discipline that admits of organization ; the only discipline known to the world for fifteen centuries ; and whilst thus extending the Church in other lands, invigorating it in our own, far more than repaying it for the pecuniary advantages they may draw from it, by presenting to it continually a picture of the lives of the Apostles realised once more in modern times ; the perils of waters, the journeyings often, the perils in the wilderness, the weariness and painfulness, the watchings often ; and so, provoking it to a wholesome emulation in saintly and self-denying labours : resources which he has never been at the pains to develope, reproaching the lukewarm minister here, when he calls to mind what his fellow-labourers across the seas would give for the very least of them ; obstacles deemed insuperable by him, reduced in his eyes to trifles, when he sees such as are so far more formidable encountered and surmounted by them ; exertions which he regards as the very utmost he can exact of himself, looking feeble indeed, when he compares them with theirs ; ecclesiastical ambition and time-serving thoughts, if he is conscious of them, made ashamed, when he sets them in the clear light of their faithful surrender of themselves, of their simplicity and singleness of heart.

Lastly, it set itself to disperse works of Christian instruction throughout the country, millions upon millions. Accordingly in the case of the Prayer-book—the foremost of them next to the Bible—by putting it freely into the hands of the people, it gave multitudes the privilege of entering at once, and without pains of their



own (which they were incompetent to bestow,) into the choicest treasures of all ecclesiastical antiquity, and into the labours of the soundest theological scholars; inso-much that to the objection of those who argue against regulating biblical interpretation according to primitive tradition, how are the bulk of men, unversed in letters, to attain to such knowledge?—how can they be expected to make themselves masters of patristical literature?—the impossibility of the thing refutes its necessity,—this Society has supplied the simple answer (the Church having in the first instance provided it,) let them read the Book of Common Prayer with which we have furnished them, and *there*, in a little compass, they have the very cream of antiquity; there, they have all the chief conclusions at which the most able divines, after the most elaborate search into the most remote compositions, have arrived; a volume, unpretending as it looks, really one of the most learned on our shelves; one involving the most careful investigation of the most copious documents for the longest period of years; so that let the most illiterate cleave to this, and he puts himself on a level in his information with the maturest students of theology that have ever lived; sips the honey without having had to sift the flowers; eats the corn, without having had to toil at the plough; clothes himself in the fleece, without having had to bear its burden; and instead of taking his measure of Scripture and its meaning, from the well-intentioned but crazy blacksmith or carpenter of his village, he is rescued by this Society from such hands, but too ready to make him their victim, and has, instead, the high prerogative assigned him of going up for counsel to a Ridley, a Pearson, a Sanderson, a Gunning or a Sparrow: and as in the case of the Prayer-book, may we thus

contemplate the operations of the Society, under the head I am now considering them, with unmixed satisfaction; so may we, in a lower degree, in the case of other volumes which it disperses abroad—volumes, I may say in passing, chosen mainly with a view to the encouragement of sober piety and unobtrusive well-doing; to the cultivation of cardinal virtues on Gospel grounds; rather than to the propagation of questions that minister strife; or the excitement of feelings that flare up for the moment and expire;—for it is impossible, I am sure, to cast an eye over the Society's Catalogue without feeling animation at the thought, that the immortal works of the master-minds of the greatest and best of our countrymen, should be thus rendered accessible even to our poorest artisans and peasants; that our cottagers should now enjoy a privilege, at little cost or at none, which at the period of the foundation of this Society belonged to few houses but those of the opulent and the learned; and that the deep scholarship and consecrated genius of past times should be thus turned over our land, so that it may be, as it were, 'watered by the foot\*.'

I have spoken of this Society with the grateful recollections of a parish priest; of a parish priest, to whose wants it ministers in so many ways, and those so important, that deprive him of the use of it, and you rob him of his right hand; and therefore I rejoice in common, I am persuaded, with very many, who by personal experience have learned its worth, that the University of Cambridge has marked its good will towards it by this public demonstration to-day. May the effect be to strengthen its hands, for God knows, they want strengthening; and swell its numbers, for they are positively as

\* Deut. xi. 10.

nothing (some seventeen thousand) compared with the population of wealthy England; with the field of labour it has to occupy; or, it is pleasing to add, with the amount of good it is doing and has done. And so heartily commending it to your bounty now, and to your zealous exertions in its behalf hereafter, I will make an end with praying to Almighty God that he will prosper us in this and every good work, that having built his Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, he will grant us to be so joined together in unity of spirit, by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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*By the same Author.*

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